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8.82L pending execution pleas is disturbing, says SC

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Calcutta Stock Exchange to shutdown after 117 years

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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SALAR DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY

wishes its readers a joyful and prosperous Deepavali.

Govt denies nod for RSS march, HC questions State

HC bench holds spl hearing on Sunday, seeks fresh plea

KALABURAGI, 19 OCT

Authorities in Chittapur, the home constituency of Minister Priyank Kharge, have denied permission for a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) route march, which was scheduled for Sunday, citing risks to law and order and potential clashes between opposing groups.

The RSS had applied to hold a Vijayadashami procession in Chittapur on 19 October at 3pm, marking both the festival and the organisation's centenary. However, Chittapur Tahsildar rejected the application on 18 October, following reports from local police and intelligence inputs indicating the likelihood of confrontation.

Complicating the matter, Bhim Army and the Indian Dalit Panthers also submitted requests to hold processions along the same route and time. The Dalit Panthers accused the RSS of deliberately planning the event in response to Minister Kharge's earlier criticism of the group's activities in public spaces.

The Tahsildar cited the danger of simultaneous processions escalating tensions, and pointed to recent unrest stemming from an incident involving RSS worker Danesh Naron, who allegedly issued threats against Minister Kharge. A police case has been registered in Bengaluru's Sadashivanagar station, sparking protests across Karnataka, including in Chittapur.

On Saturday, local officials, with police assistance, removed banners and cut-outs installed by the RSS without prior approval. The State government also issued a new directive requiring "prior permission" for any private group intending to use government premises for public events. The move followed a Cabinet decision prompted by Priyank letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah seeking curbs on RSS activities in public institutions and grounds.

Meanwhile, Karnataka High Court on Sunday directed the State government to consider the application seeking permission for the route march of RSS) on 2 November.

The Court directed RSS representatives to file a fresh application. The court was hearing a petition filed by Ashok Patil on behalf of the RSS, originally seeking directions to allow the 19 October procession. Justice MGS Kamal asked the petitioner whether an alternative date was possible. The counsel proposed 2 November, which the court accepted. Authorities have been directed to review the fresh application and submit their report by 24 October.

The judge directed the State and district authorities to submit a report before the Court on October 24 indicating the action taken by them on the petitioner's application and detailing aspects like route, place and time. The Court acknowledged the State's duty to maintain public order but also underscored that the citizens have a corresponding responsibility to cooperate in preserving peace and harmony. *—PTI*

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RSS had applied to hold a Vijayadashami procession in Chittapur at 3pm on 19 October ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

VHP demands Delhi to be renamed 'Indraprastha'

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) has formally demanded that Delhi be renamed 'Indraprastha' to reflect its ancient 5,000-year-old history and rich cultural heritage. In a detailed letter to Delhi Culture Minister Kapil Mishra, the VHP also suggested renaming Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi Railway Station, and Shahjahanabad Development Board with the Indraprastha title. VHP Delhi secretary Surendra Kumar Gupta called for a "balanced presentation" of the city's heritage, including monuments to Hindu kings, Pandava-era sites, and a grand memorial for King Hemchandra Vikramaditya. He added that the proposals follow recommendations from scholars, historians, and public representatives at a recent heritage event, 'Indraprastha Punarjagran Sankalp Sabha'. *—PTI*

Ladakh leaders to meet MHA panel for statehood

LEH, 19 OCT

Ladakh representatives are scheduled to hold talks with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) sub-committee in Delhi on 22 October, officials confirmed. Three delegates each from the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), along with Ladakh MP Mohd Haneefa Jan, will attend. Their primary demands include statehood for the Union Territory and constitutional safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. LAB co-chairman Chering Dorje Lakruk welcomed the dialogue, expressing hope for a "positive outcome" and constructive engagement. The meeting follows violent protests in Leh on 24 September over stalled negotiations, which left four dead and scores injured, with over 50 arrests, including activist Sonam Wangchuk. *—PTI*

Pak & Afghanistan agree to ceasefire

ISLAMABAD, 19 OCT

Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to an immediate ceasefire and the creation of mechanisms to ensure lasting peace, following deadly cross-border clashes that killed soldiers, civilians, and militants on both sides.

The breakthrough was achieved during negotiations in Doha between Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Afghanistan's acting Defence Minister Mullah Yaqoob. The talks were facilitated by Qatar and Turkiye, according to a statement from Qatar's Foreign Ministry.

"Both sides agreed to an immediate ceasefire and the establishment of mechanisms to consolidate lasting peace and stability," the statement read.

The agreement also includes plans for follow-up meetings to ensure effective implementation and long-term sustainability of the truce.

Tensions between the two countries had escalated following alleged Pakistani airstrikes near Kabul last week, prompting retaliatory exchanges along the border. *—PTI*

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No truce? Israel strikes Gaza, halts aid

TEL AVIV, 19 OCT

Israel's military launched air and artillery strikes in Gaza on Sunday, the first major test of the week-old ceasefire, after claiming Hamas militants fired at Israeli troops in areas under Israeli control. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed the military to take "strong action" against violations, though he stopped short of threatening a return to full-scale conflict. Hamas denied involvement in clashes in southern Gaza's Rafah, with both sides accusing each other of violating the fragile truce and raising concerns about the ceasefire's durability.

Mourners carry bodies of Palestinians killed by Israel

Meanwhile, An Israeli security official said Sunday the transfer of humanitarian aid into Gaza is halted "until further notice" . The halt in aid is occurring a little over a week since the start of truce. *—PTI*

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Caste survey extended till 31 October, says DKS

BENGALURU, 19 OCT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar announced on Sunday that the Social and Educational Survey, commonly called the 'caste census', has been extended until October 31. The survey is being conducted by the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes.

The survey began on 22 September and was initially scheduled to end on October 7. The deadline was first extended to 18 October, with Dasara holidays also extended for government and aided schools to facilitate the use of teachers as enumerators.

However, Shivakumar said teachers will no longer be involved in the enumeration work during this extended period. Instead, other government employees will be utilised to complete the survey. He added that an online option will also be made available for people to participate.

He said that outside Bengaluru South, Bidar, and Dharwad, about 90 per cent of the survey work is complete. Bengaluru city currently has a 67 per cent coverage rate, with 20 per cent of respondents yet to disclose their details.

Shivakumar urged all communities to participate and assured the process is based on a scientific 60-question questionnaire. The survey's estimated cost is around Rs 420 crore, compared to Rs 165.51 crore spent on a similar exercise in 2015.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah chaired a meeting on Sunday reviewing the survey's progress with senior ministers and officials. *—PTI*

Jharkhand hotelier killed over non-veg biryani mix-up

RANCHI, 13 OCT

A 47-year-old restaurant owner in Ranchi was shot dead after a vegetarian customer was allegedly served non-veg biryani, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place around 11.30pm on Saturday after a customer sought vegetarian biryani from the eatery located on Kanke-Pithoria Road and left after taking the parcel but returned after some time along with some others complaining that he was, instead, served non-veg biryani, Superintendent of Police (Rural) Praveen Pushkar said.

The restaurant owner, Vijay Kumar Nag, 47, was having food at a table, when one of the assailants opened fire at him and a bullet hit his chest. The deceased was a resident of Bhittha in Kanke police station area. *—PTI*

UP HC fumes as interfaith couple detained

PRAYAGRAJ, 19 OCT

The Allahabad High Court has condemned the Uttar Pradesh Police for the "illegal detention" of an interfaith couple, Shane Ali and Rashmi, ordering their immediate release and emphasising that officers must not yield to social pressure under any circumstances.

A special holiday sitting, presided over by Justices Salil Kumar Rai and Divesh Chandra Samant, deemed the couple's custody unlawful. Shane Ali and Rashmi were taken into police custody on 15 October shortly after leaving court, despite there being no competent legal order permitting such action.

The bench noted that Rashmi is an adult and cannot be detained without proper legal authority. Holding the couple due to "tension in the area" arising from their differing religions was declared "not acceptable" and a violation of their fundamental constitutional rights. "A person can be detained only under the law," the judges said, adding that detention under social pressure is entirely indefensible.

PHOTO: AI

The court directed the investigating officer to safely escort the couple to a place of their choice and held that officers who failed to protect their liberty are liable for departmental action. Additionally, the SSPs of Prayagraj, Aligarh, and Bareilly were instructed to ensure the couple's security against any extra-legal interference.

An inquiry report from the Aligarh SSP has been ordered for submission at the next hearing on 28 November. *—PTI*

RJD denies ticket, man breaks down on road

RJD leader Madan Prasad Shah tears his kurta Lalu Prasad'shome , in Patna on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

PATNA, 19 OCT

High drama unfolded outside RJD president Lalu Prasad's residence on Sunday when an aspirant broke down, tore off his clothes and started rolling down the road after being denied a ticket by the party for the Bihar elections.

Madan Sah, whose theatrics have gone viral on social media, claimed that he has been associated with the party for a long time and was hopeful of a ticket from Madhuban, where he was the runner-up in 2020, losing to the BJP candidate by a small margin. "I was asked to cough up Rs 2.70 crore. I managed by putting the weddings of my children on hold. Now I am finished. At least, they should return the money," said Sah. Party leaders were tight-lipped on the allegations. *—PTI*

FALL FROM GRACE?

No RoKo show as India falls to Aus in Perth

PERTH, 19 OCT

India's much-hyped top-order comeback ended in disappointment, as the team slumped to a seven-wicket defeat against Australia in the rain-curtailed first ODI on Sunday. The match was reduced to 26 overs per side, and India, after being asked to bat, managed only 136 for 9. Australia chased down the revised DLS target of 131 in 21.1 overs.

India's innings lacked momentum, with both Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli falling cheaply — the duo lasting a combined 22 balls. Rohit, playing his first international match in months and reportedly fitter than ever after an intense fitness regimen, looked rusty. Despite signs of rhythm in the nets, he was undone by Josh Hazlewood's bounce, edging to second slip after a frustrated start.

Kohli, back from a long break in London, also failed to impress. The failures sparked sharp reactions on social media, with fans expressing disappointment and some even calling for their retirement. Their struggles echoed the dismal Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2024–25, which marked the end of their Test careers.

Mitch Marsh bats during Aus vs India in Perth ***PHOTO: PTI***

Australia's chase was anchored by skipper Mitchell Marsh (46* off 52) and Josh Philippe (37 off 29), who added a vital 55-run stand. Indian pacers — Arshdeep Singh, Mohammed Siraj, and Harshit Rana, lacked control, conceding boundaries freely. Marsh punished all three with a six each.

Former pacer Varun Aaron criticised the duo's lack of match practice, urging them to play domestic cricket. *—PTI*

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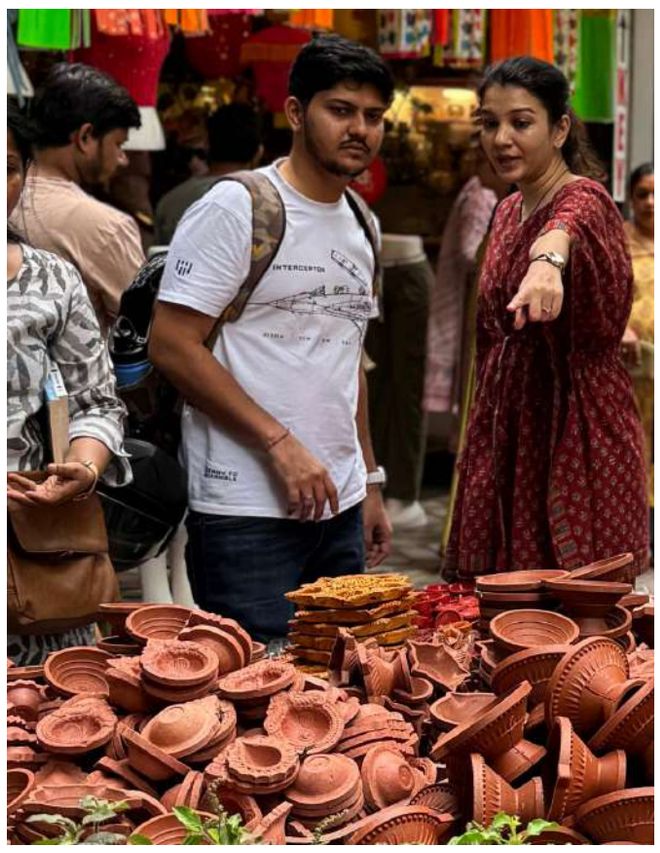
FESTIVE BUZZ



Shoppers throng Bengaluru markets for diyas, lanterns and crackers ahead of Deepavali in Bengaluru on Sunday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

THIEVES STEAL JEWELS IN 4 MINS FROM LOUVRE

PARIS, 19 OCT

In a daring daylight robbery at the world's most-visited museum, thieves struck the Louvre on Sunday morning, stealing priceless Napoleonic jewels in just four minutes. The brazen heist unfolded as tourists crowded the galleries.

Using a basket lift, the suspects accessed the Seine-facing façade, an ongoing construction zone, then forced entry into the Galerie d'Apollon by cutting window panes with disc cutters. They smashed display cases and fled with nine pieces from a 23-item collection linked to Napoleon and Empress Eugénie, including a broken emerald-studded crown found outside the museum.

Culture Minister Rachida Dati called the thieves "professionals" and described the swift, non-violent strike as shocking. Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez confirmed the robbers escaped on scooters.

The heist exposes security vulnerabilities amid the Louvre's ongoing struggles with overcrowding and staff shortages. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Cong holds 'vote theft' signature campaign in Mysuru

MYSURU, 19 OCT

Congress activists, led by former Krishnaraja MLA MK Somashekar, held a signature campaign across various parts of the Krishnaraja Assembly segment on Sunday, alleging large-scale "vote theft" in past elections. This was the second day of the campaign in Mysuru, part of a nationwide initiative launched by the All India Congress Committee (AICC) to highlight alleged electoral malpractice. The collected signatures will be compiled into a petition and sent to President Droupadi Murmu via the District Congress Office. During the campaign, Congress workers raised slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, accusing them of benefiting from electoral fraud.

Addressing party workers, Somashekar alleged that the BJP-led Union Government came to power through "vote theft" during previous parliamentary elections. He also criticised the Election Commission of India, accusing it of functioning like a BJP affiliate and ignoring evidence of electoral manipulation presented by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

Somashekar questioned the Commission's silence, despite what he claimed was "clear proof" submitted by the Congress. *—Salar News*

Permit to use govt spaces doesn't target anyone: DKS

Govt targeting RSS to distract from its failures: BJP

BENGALURU, 19 OCT

State Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday defended the state government's recent directive making prior permission mandatory for private organisations to use government property or premises.

He said the move was not targeted at any specific group, including the RSS organisation, and was based on earlier decisions by the previous BJP regime.

"We have not named anyone. The order is a continuation of rules introduced when Jagadish Shettar was the chief minister.

We have only redefined them," Shivakumar told reporters, denying allegations that the Congress government was curbing RSS activities.

The government's order, issued on Saturday, followed a Cabinet decision prompted by a letter from Panchayat Raj and IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge.

In his letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah dated 4 October, Kharge alleged that RSS 'shakhas' were being conducted in government and aided schools, where "slogans are shouted and negative ideas are being instilled in children."

DyCM DK Shivakumar speaks to a child during 'Walk with Bengaluru Citizens', at a park in Bengaluru on Sunday **PHOTO: SALAR**

Meanwhile, the opposition BJP accused the Congress of trying to divert public attention from its failures by creating controversy over the events conducted by RSS.

Welcoming the Karnataka High Court's directive asking the RSS to file a fresh application for its route march in Chittapur on 2 November, BJP leaders alleged the state government was acting with political motives.

Union Minister and senior BJP leader Pralhad Joshi said, "We welcome the High Court's decision. We believe in the Constitution and judiciary."

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka accused the Congress of arrogance and claimed the government was showing bias by denying RSS permissions while allowing Friday prayers to block roads in Bengaluru.

"This issue is being created to hide failures and the government's inability to attract industry," he added.

JD(S) leader and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy echoed similar sentiments, alleging the Congress was using the RSS issue, via Priyank Kharge, to deflect attention from the lapses arose due to governance. *—PTI*

M'RASHTRA GETS LION'S SHARE

Shah approves Rs 384 crore flood relief aid for K'taka

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has approved the advance release of Rs 1,950.80 crore as the second instalment of the central share of the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to Karnataka and Maharashtra for the year 2025–26.

According to an official statement, Rs 384.40 crore has been allocated to Karnataka and Rs 1,566.40 crore to Maharashtra to support immediate relief and rehabilitation for people affected by heavy rainfall and floods during this year's southwest monsoon. The funds are expected to aid the restoration of damaged infrastructure, housing, and essential services in severely hit districts.

The statement said the Central Government, under PM Narendra Modi's leadership and Shah's guidance, remains fully committed to assisting states affected by floods, landslides, and cloudbursts, ensuring timely financial and logistical support for emergency response.

So far this year, the government has released Rs 13,603.20 crore under the SDRF to 27 states and Rs 2,189.28 crore under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) to 15 states. Additionally, Rs 4,571.30 crore has been disbursed from the State Disaster Mitigation Fund (SDMF) to 21 states and Rs 372.09 crore from the National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF) to nine states.

The Centre also extended logistical support, including deployment of the NDRF, defence for rescue operations. This monsoon saw the highest-ever deployment of NDRF teams across 30 states and UTs. *—PTI*

BJP accuses CM, DyCM of 'Jungle Raj' in State

BENGALURU, 19 OCT

BJP leader R Ashoka on Sunday accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar of presiding over a 'Jungle Raj' in the State, claiming governance has been replaced by arrogance and intimidation.

Ashoka's remarks followed Shivakumar's statement on Saturday asserting that contractors cannot threaten the government while promising to meet with them to discuss pending dues. The Karnataka State Contractors Association (KSCA), which met the Deputy CM, warned it would strike if pending payments worth Rs 33,000 crore are not substantially cleared within two months.

The KSCA had earlier alleged that commission demands for releasing payments across several departments have doubled under the Congress government compared with the previous BJP regime.

"Jungle Raj in Karnataka! So now, protesting for your rights is considered a threat?" Ashoka asked. "Deputy CM Shivakumar has the audacity to say contractors can't threaten the government, when all they are demanding is the release of Rs 33,000 crore in dues. That is not a threat, it is a cry for justice," he wrote on X.

He added, "In Rahul Gandhi's pocket constitution, citizens have no right to protest, no right to demand dues, and no right to question corruption. So-called Karnataka Model has become a model of chaos, corruption, and collapse" under Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar. *—PTI*

Some going 'too far' to criticise: DKS

BENGALURU, 19 OCT

State Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday said he welcomes criticism but accused some industry leaders of going 'too far' in their remarks on the City's infrastructure woes.

Responding to persistent complaints from industry veterans like former Infosys CFO TV Mohandas Pai and Biocon Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Shivakumar said the Congress government is committed to addressing civic issues. "People have given us an opportunity and we want to serve them," he said, stressing that projects to improve roads, traffic flow, and drainage systems are already underway.

Highlighting City's rapid urban expansion, Shivakumar noted that 3,000 vehicles are registered daily and the city now has 1.23 crore vehicles for a population of 1.4 crore. He urged critics to remember their roots, adding that some who grew their businesses in the city have forgotten from where they started.

A pothole on Malagala Main Road in Bengaluru poses a serious hazard, forcing motorists to drive with difficulty **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

The Deputy CM pointed to initiatives like the 'Fix My Pothole' WhatsApp campaign, saying citizens can now directly report civic issues. "No other city in India offers such an opportunity," he said.

Home Minister G Parameshwara advised industrialists to raise concerns privately with the Chief Minister or city officials, warning that public criticism could hurt City's global image and investor confidence.

Mazumdar-Shaw dismissed allegations of bias, asserting that she and Pai had criticised previous BJP and JD(S) governments too. BJP leader R Ashoka accused Shivakumar of "intimidating business leaders" instead of fixing civic problems, stating, ""Stop this ugly politics.

If your Congress government cannot deliver on its promises, at least don't intimidate business leaders and citizens who speak their mind," he posted on 'X'. *—PTI*

GETTING FESTIVAL READY

NAMMA BENGALURU BUSTLES WITH DEEPAVALI SPIRIT

Bengaluru radiated festive cheer on Sunday as shoppers flocked to markets ahead of Deepavali, the festival of lights, celebrated across India. Streets near Safina Plaza in Commercial Street glowed with dazzling displays of lanterns and fairy lights, while roadside stalls brimmed with colourful diyas, and firecrackers. Young and old, all were seen soaking in the joyful atmosphere

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

QUOTE of THE DAY

"I have been deeply engaged in social work in the region for more than two decades, and now, on people's call, I have entered politics

PRITI KINNAR
Transgender social worker, Jan Suraaj candidate

Dynasts continue dominating Bihar polls

Family members of political leaders are contesting in the upcoming Bihar polls

PATNA, 19 OCT

Dynasts continue to dominate Bihar's political landscape, with a considerable number of candidates being either sons, daughters, wives or close relatives of established politicians.

Experts say that no party in Bihar can claim moral superiority on this ground as far as dynasts entering politics is concerned. The 243-member Bihar Assembly will go to polls in two phases on 6 and 11 November, and results will be announced on 14 November.

Prominent sons, daughters and wives, who are in the fray, from different political parties are RJD's Tejashwi Yadav (younger son and heir apparent of party supremo Lalu Prasad) from Raghopur, BJP's Samrat Choudhary (son of former minister Shakuni Choudhary) from Tarapur, RJD's Osama Shahab (son of gangster-turned-politician, the late Mohammad Shahabuddin) from Raghunathpur.

Also in the fray are Rashtriya Lok Morcha's Snehlata (wife of party chief Upendra Kushwaha) from Sasaram, BJP's Nitish Mishra (son of former CM Jagannath Mishra) from Jhanjharpur, HAM's Deepa Manjhi (daughter-in-law of Union minister Jitan Ram Manjhi) from Imamganj, Jan Suraaj's Jagriti Thakur (granddaughter of legendary socialist leader Karpoori Thakur) from Morwa and Chanakya Prasad Ranjan (son of JD(U) Banka MP Girdhari Prasad Yadav), who filed his nomination as RJD candidate from Belhar.

Commenting on this, Vidyarthi Vikas, Assistant Professor (Economics), AN Sinha Institute of Social Studies said, "The way dynasts are entering politics, it shows that now all political parties are least bothered about ideological commitments, constitutional values and also democratic principles."

"People should raise their voices against dynasts, who easily enter politics because they belong to established political families. This is also happening because education has never been given priority in Bihar in the last 77 years," he said. *—PTI*

Osama Shahab , Tejashwi Yadav, Samrat Choudhary **PHOTO: PTI**

AIMIM fields 25 candidates for Bihar polls

PATNA, 19 OCT

The Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM on Sunday announced 25 candidates for the upcoming Bihar assembly polls, including two non-Muslims, after being ignored by the INDIA bloc.

The list, shared on X, features Akhtarul Iman, the party's Bihar president and lone MLA, seeking reelection from Amour constituency.

"We are happy to announce AIMIM candidates for Bihar elections. Inshallah, we will be a voice of justice for Bihar's weakest and most neglected," the party said.

Iman faces a new JD(U) contender, Sabir Ali, a former Rajya Sabha MP expelled from the party 11 years ago.

Most AIMIM candidates are contesting in Seemanchal, the flood-prone north-eastern region with a large Muslim population.

Outside Seemanchal, the party fielded Manoj Kumar Das from Sikandra (Gaya) against sitting MLA Prafull Kumar Manjhi, and Rana Ranjeet Singh from Dhaka (East Champaran), brother of BJP MLA Rana Randheer Singh. Dhaka's BJP candidate is incumbent Pawan Kumar Jaiswal. *—PTI*

Modi to launch Bihar election campaign on 24 Oct

PATNA, 19 OCT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch his campaign for the Bihar assembly polls next week, with as many as four election rallies scheduled by the end of this month, state BJP president Dilip Jaiswal said on Sunday.

Addressing a press conference here, Jaiswal said Modi will kick off his campaign with a rally in Samastipur on 24 October, followed by another election meeting in Begusarai the very same day.

Jaiswal said the PM will be back in the poll-bound state on 30 October, when he will be addressing rallies in Muzaffarpur and Chhapra, the town where Saran district is headquartered.

"The PM's rallies are also scheduled on 2, 3, 6 and 7 November. Details of these will be shared in due course," he said *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

TVK gives ₹20 lakh to Karur stampede victims families

CHENNAI, 19 OCT

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) has transferred ₹20 lakh to the families of those who died in the Karur stampede on 27 September, which claimed 41 lives, party chief Vijay said on Sunday. He added that the amount was sent via RTGS on 18 October as a family welfare fund, calling it a gesture of compassion and support. Vijay expressed condolences and said the party is taking legal steps to obtain permission for a personal meeting with the victims' families. Earlier, Chief Minister MK Stalin announced Rs 4.87 crore compensation for the families. The Supreme Court has ordered a CBI probe into the incident, with IPS officer Praveen Kumar leading the investigation. *—ANI*

WB MP claims attack on convoy in Darjeeling

KOLKATA, 19 OCT

West Bengal BJP MP Raju Bista claimed that his convoy was attacked when it was passing through Masdhura area in Darjeeling, prompting the police to start a probe. A complaint was lodged by the BJP at the Jorebunglow Police Station. The police said a stone hit the vehicle in which Bista's close aide and BJP worker Sanjeev Lama was seated. Union minister and former state BJP president Sukanta Majumdar condemned the alleged attack on Bista's convoy, which he claimed was carried out by hired miscreants. The alleged attack on Bista's convoy came weeks after a mob assaulted BJP MP from Maldah North, Khagen Murmu, and Siliguri MLA Shankar Ghosh, when the duo went to oversee rehabilitation efforts in Darjeeling. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

400-page chargesheet filed in Delhi CM attack

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Delhi Police have filed a 400-page chargesheet against Sakriya Rajeshbhai Khimjibhai, accused of attacking Chief Minister Rekha Gupta during a 'Jan Sunwai' programme at her Civil Lines office in August. Khimjibhai and his friend Syed Tahsin Raza face charges under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for attempt to murder, assaulting a public servant, and criminal conspiracy. The chargesheet cites over 40 witnesses. Police said Khimjibhai attacked Gupta after she backed a Supreme Court order to relocate stray dogs. The magistrate took cognisance of the report on Saturday and listed the case for October 30. Gupta's office called the attack a "well-planned conspiracy", and she later underwent a medico-legal examination. *—PTI*

EC's economic intelligence panel restarts after 6 yrs

Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and Vivek Joshi **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

The Election Commission (EC) has reactivated its economic intelligence panel after a gap of six years to curb the use of money, liquor and drugs to influence voters ahead of the Bihar polls.

The Multi-Departmental Committee on Election Intelligence (MDCEI) met here on Friday for the first time since 2019 to fine-tune the strategy of enforcement agencies and central police forces to prevent the use of money power and freebies to sway voters in poll-bound Bihar.

The committee was formed in 2014 ahead of that year's general elections.

Officials said the committee met ahead of polls between 2014 and 2019, but did not do so formally thereafter. Agency and security forces' heads had been meeting to strategise steps to check money power. On Friday, they met on a bigger scale.

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and Election Commissioners S S Sandhu and Vivek Joshi were present at the meeting.

- Officials said the committee met ahead of polls between 2014 and 2019, but did not do so formally thereafter. On Friday, they met on a bigger scale.

The committee includes 17 departments -- Central Board of Direct Taxes, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, Enforcement Directorate, Department of Revenue Intelligence, Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, Financial Intelligence Unit – India, Reserve Bank of India, Indian Banks' Association, Narcotics Control Bureau, Railway Protection Force, Cental Industrial Security Force, Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force, Sashastra Seema Bal, Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, Airports Authority of India and the Department of Posts. *—PTI*

BJP MP sparks row over 'betrayers' remark

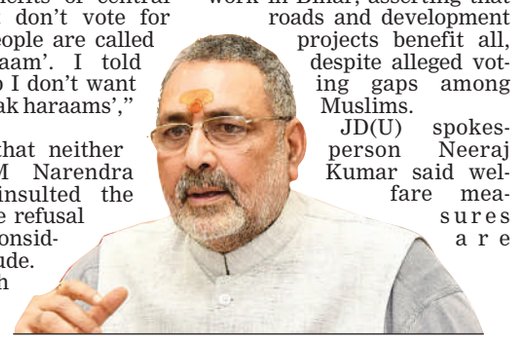
PATNA, 19 OCT

Union Minister **Giriraj Singh** courted fresh controversy on Saturday, calling some voters 'Namak Haraams' (betrayers) during a rally in Arwal, Bihar, drawing widespread criticism across the state.

Singh, BJP MP from Begusarai, recounted asking a Muslim cleric whether he had an Ayushman Bharat health card.

The cleric confirmed, but when asked to swear on God whether he had voted for Singh, he refused. "Muslims take the benefits of central schemes but don't vote for us... Such people are called 'namak haraam'. I told maulvi sahab I don't want votes of 'namak haraams'," Singh said.

He added that neither he nor PM Narendra Modi had insulted the cleric, yet the refusal to vote was considered ingratitude.



Singh praised the NDA government's infrastructure work in Bihar, asserting that roads and development projects benefit all, despite alleged voting gaps among Muslims.

JD(U) spokesperson Neeraj Kumar said welfare measures are non-discriminatory but noted the concern over votes from a particular community, while acknowledging Singh's freedom of expression.

RJD state spokesperson Mrityunjay Tiwary criticized the BJP for focusing on Hindu-Muslim narratives rather than core development issues.

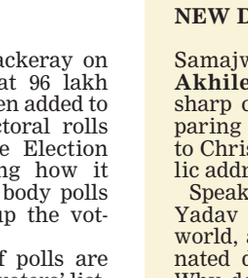
Purnea MP Rajesh Ranjan (Pappu Yadav) condemned Singh, arguing the term "namak haraam" should apply to those who aided the British during India's freedom struggle. *—PTI*

BJP exploiting J&K Pandits: BJP leader

JAMMU, 19 OCT

BJP leader **Jahanzaib Sirwal** has accused his party of using displaced Kashmiri Pandits for political gains, calling on senior leadership to address the "longstanding injustice" faced by the community. Sirwal, who joined the BJP last April after leaving Congress, said the community has been "unpaid, unrecognised, and unacknowledged" despite their steadfast support.

Sirwal demanded decisive action beyond parliamentary mentions and symbolic gestures. He urged senior leaders to visit camps, engage with community representatives, and develop a comprehensive plan for the safe return and dignified rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits.



The leader described conditions in the camps—lacking proper housing, healthcare, and opportunities for economic reintegration—as a "humanitarian crisis" persisting for over 30 years. Families uprooted from their homes have endured decades of hardship and neglect, he said.

He stressed that addressing the grievances of Kashmiri Pandits would demonstrate the BJP's commitment to justice, inclusivity, and compassion. *—PTI*

'If girl goes to non-Hindu man, break her legs'

BENGALURU, 19 OCT

Former Bhopal MP **Pragya Singh Thakur** has sparked controversy after urging parents to stop their daughters from visiting the homes of "non-Hindus" and to physically punish them if they disobey.

Speaking at a religious event in Bhopal earlier this month, Thakur advised parents to "leave no stone unturned", stating "If our girl tries to go to a non-Hindu man, do not spare breaking her legs. Because someone who does not follow our values, who does not listen, must be disciplined," she said.

Party spokesperson Bhupendra Gupta accused the BJP of promoting "hatred" and questioned why such extreme rhetoric was needed.

She defended her comments, stating that parents must enforce discipline and ensure a "cultural upbringing" for their children. *—Agencies*

TN BJP flays CM over Hindi names

CHENNAI, 19 OCT

Tamil Nadu BJP on Sunday hit back at Chief Minister **MK Stalin** for his "arrogance" remark targeting the Saffron-party led regime at the Centre for naming schemes in Hindi language and asserted that Hindi is the country's official language.

On Stalin asking how does people, branded as corrupt, suddenly become clean after joining the BJP alliance, the BJP said ex-minister, V Senthil Balaji, involved allegedly in the cash-for-jobs scam is in the DMK and hence, the CM must actually ask himself this question.

Narayanan Thirupathy, chief spokesperson of Tamil Nadu BJP said Stalin has posed the BJP several questions and has demanded answers.

The BJP leader's question was: "Why is that the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister spitting venom on the majority people's beliefs by ridiculing Hindu Religion/ Sanatan Dharma? Is that for want of Minority votes? If yes, is it not shameful?

Referring to Stalin's poser lashing out at the BJP for backing the special intensive revision of electoral rolls, which took away people's votes and results in vote theft, Thirupathy slammed the DMK.

To the CM's questioning the Centre for not recognising the archeological findings from Keeladi, Thirupathy said the query proved his ignorance. *—PTI*

JAIN TRUST PROPERTY

Union minister refutes Rs 230 cr land deal claim

PUNE, 19 OCT

Union minister **Murlidhar Mohol** on Sunday dismissed allegations against him over the sale of a Jain trust property in Pune, saying he was not associated with the builder when the deal in question was formalised.

Farmers' leader and former MP Raju Shetti has alleged that Mohol, the BJP MP from Pune, was involved in the matter of the proposed sale of a prime property belonging to the Seth Hirachand Nemchand Jain Digambar Boarding to a private builder.

The upmarket property in Model Colony, measuring around 12,000 square metres (3.5 acres), houses a several-decade-old Jain boarding facility and the Shri Bhagwan Mahavir Digambar Jain Temple, both of which are part of the Seth Hirachand Nemchand Smarak Trust, a charitable trust established in 1958.

The said property has been acquired by Pune-based Gokhale Constructions for Rs 311 crore from Seth Hirachand Nemchand Memorial Trust.

Thousands of Jain community members held a protest on Friday, alleging that a few trustees have entered into an agreement with the developer and sold the property in violation of the trust's constitution.

Speaking to reporters here on Sunday, Mohol said, "Raju Shetti should have spoken to me once while making such a serious allegation.

I would have placed the true situation before him."

Mohol said that during the purchase of the property, all transactions were carried out by Gokhale Builders, yet the allegation was made against him. *—PTI*

Raj Thackeray alleges 96L 'fake' voters in M'rashtra

MUMBAI, 19 OCT

MNS chief Raj Thackeray on Sunday alleged that 96 lakh fake voters have been added to Maharashtra's electoral rolls and challenged the Election Commission, asking how it will hold the local body polls without cleaning up the voters' list.

Thackeray said if polls are held by rigging the voters' list, then it is the biggest insult to electors. He urged his party workers to verify the voters' list.Various Opposition parties, including the Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress, NCP (SP) and MNS, recently met the State Election Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer over duplicate names in the electoral rolls across different addresses and assembly segments. The Opposition called for "rectification" in the rolls and removal of "anomalies" ahead of the rural and urban body elections. Raj claimed that 8 to 10 lakh fake voters have been added in Mumbai and 8 to 8.5 lakh in Thane, Pune and Nashik. *—PTI*

Akhilesh under fire for Deepavali-Christmas remark

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

- The comments have intensified criticism of Yadav, with opponents accusing him of undermining Indian traditions

Samajwadi Party chief **Akhilesh Yadav** drew sharp criticism after comparing Diwali celebrations to Christmas during a public address.

Speaking at a gathering, Yadav said, "Across the world, all cities get illuminated during Christmas... Why do we have to spend money on lamps and candles? What can we expect from this government? We will make sure there are more beautiful lights."

His remarks triggered immediate backlash from BJP leaders and the Vishva Hindu Parishad. BJP spokesperson Vinod Bansal accused Yadav of glorifying foreign traditions over Indian culture and called him the so-called messiah of jihadis and conversion gangs.

Madhya Pradesh minister Vishwas Sarang condemned Yadav, questioning his respect for Diwali rituals. The comments have intensified criticism of Yadav, with opponents accusing him of undermining Indian traditions while praising foreign festivals, sparking a heated debate ahead of Diwali. *—Agencies*

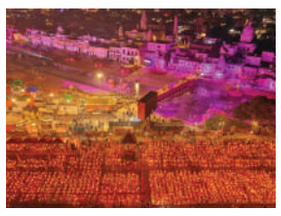


PHOTO: ANI

Ayodhya sees record tourist footfall: Govt

LUCKNOW/AYODHYA, 19 OCT

The holy city of Ayodhya has recorded an unprecedented 23.82 crore visitors between January and June this year, reflecting its growing national and international appeal. Officials attribute the surge to the completion of the Ram temple, enhanced infrastructure, and the rising popularity of the annual Deepotsav festival. Tourist arrivals have increased steadily since 2017, creating thousands of employment opportunities and boosting the local economy. The Uttar Pradesh government said improved transport links, including new highways, an upgraded airport, and a modern railway station, have made travel easier for pilgrims. Preparations are underway for Deepotsav 2025, when nearly 33,000 volunteers will light 26 lakh lamps along the Saryu river.—*PTI*

M'rashtra activist fasts on charpoy for ST status

JALNA, 19 OCT

Banjara activist Vijay Chavan has begun an indefinite fast in Jalna, demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for his community. In a symbolic act, he is sitting on a traditional charpoy tied to a tree, drawing attention from locals and social organisations. The Banjaras, currently classified as Vimukta Jati and Nomadic Tribes (VJNT) with a three per cent quota, seek recognition under the Hyderabad Gazette, which had earlier listed them as tribes. Chavan said the community enjoyed reservation benefits under the erstwhile Hyderabad State and now wants those rights restored. The protest follows the Maharashtra government's decision to use the same Gazette to grant Kunbi certificates to Marathas, fuelling caste-based agitations.—*PTI*

MP stn vendor takes man's watch for 'samosas'

JABALPUR, 19 OCT

A railway vendor has been detained after a video went viral showing him allegedly taking a passenger's wristwatch as payment for samosas following a failed online transaction. The incident occurred on Friday evening at Platform 5 of Jabalpur station. The footage shows the passenger attempting a UPI payment that failed as his train began moving, prompting the vendor to grab his collar before accepting the watch. The Railway Protection Force detained the vendor on Saturday, and officials confirmed that action is being taken to cancel his licence. The vendor later admitted misbehaving when the payment failed but said he eventually returned the watch. A case has been registered under the Railways Act, and investigations are ongoing.—*PTI*

Air India Milan flight to bring back stranded travellers

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

India will operate a special flight from Milan to Delhi on Sunday to bring back over 250 passengers stranded in the Italian city after the airline had cancelled their flight on 17 October following a technical issue. Social media was flooded with complaints about the lack of adequate facilities for the passengers. The airline also said its teams are proactively reaching out to the affected passengers, who were previously rebooked on other airlines with post-Diwali arrivals, offering them the option to maintain their existing bookings or switch to the additional flight operating today. The flight AI138 on Friday was to be operated with a Boeing 787-8 plane, also known as the Dreamliner.—*PTI*

8.82L pending execution pleas is disturbing, says SC

3,38,685 execution pleas were decided in past six months

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

The Supreme Court has termed as "highly disappointing" and "alarming" the pendency of over 8.82 lakh execution petitions before different courts across the country.

Execution petitions are the pleas filed by a decree holder seeking enforcement of court orders passed in a civil dispute.

The court reviewed the compliance of its order directing all high courts to instruct civil courts within their jurisdiction to decide execution petitions within six months.

Presiding officers would be held liable for any delay.

A total of 3,38,685 execution petitions have been decided and disposed of.

The top court requested all the high courts to evolve some procedure and guide their district judiciary for effective and expeditious disposal of the pending pleas.

SC reviewed its order directing all high courts to instruct civil courts to decide execution petitions within six months **PHOTO: PTI**

The apex court, however, observed that "unfortunately, the Karnataka High Court has failed to furnish us with the necessary data in this regard."

The court sought complete figures from all high courts regarding the status of execution petitions.

On 6 March, the top court had noted that the execution petitions filed for execution of decrees in civil disputes were pending for three to four years.

The verdict came in a civil dispute over land arising in 1980 between two individuals from Tamil Nadu.

The civil dispute before the bench concerned a sale agreement of 30 June, 1980, entered by Tamil Nadu resident Ayyavoo Udayar over a piece of land.

After the dispute arose over title of the land, Udayar filed a civil suit for specific performance against the defendants in 1986 with respect to an agreement to sell.

In 2004, the decree-holder filed a petition to direct the defendants to execute the sale deed and deliver the possession of the property. It was, however, dismissed.

This was challenged by way of a revision petition, which was allowed in 2006 but the sale deed was not executed. —*PTI*

LET'S STAY SAFE THIS DEEPAVALI

Deepavali, the festival of lights, is a time of joy and celebration. As we enjoy the festivities, it's also important to stay mindful of safety, the environment and those around us.

PHOTO: AI

DOS

- Use legally approved fire crackers.
- Burst crackers in open spaces.
- Keep water, fire extinguisher, first aid and sand nearby .
- Stand at a safe distance after lighting crackers.
- Wear cotton clothing.
- Monitor children while bursting crackers.
- Place candles and earthen lamps on stable surfaces to avoid fires.
- Avoid overloading sockets and check lights for damage.

DON'TS

- Burst crackers near buildings, vehicles and inflammable substances.
- Wear synthetic fabrics.
- Light multiple crackers togther.
- Light crackers inside the house.
- Light crackers near electrical installations and gas cylinders.
- Light crackers while holding them in your hand.

Kerala joins PM SHRI for Rs 1,466 cr funds

T'PURAM, 19 OCT

Kerala General Education Minister V Sivankutty on Sunday announced that the state will join the PM SHRI scheme to get the due central funds, but asserted that it would not backtrack from the existing educational policy in the state.

He said every citizen of the country deserves central funds and so there is no need for Kerala to stay away from it.

There is already a due of Rs 1,466 crore central funds to the state for various educational programmes and children of Kerala deserve it, the minister said.

Kerala Education Minister V Sivankutty clarified that the state would not implement anything against the existing education policy **PHOTO: PTI**

He said the state can implement various programmes in the educational sector and pay the salaries of over 7,000 teachers smoothly only if it receives the funds.

Various departments, including health, higher education and agriculture have already accepted the central funds. The state would not implement anything against the existing policy, even if the Centre suggests so, he said.

The PM Schools for Rising India scheme is an initiative to upgrade select schools across the country. —*PTI*

NMC approves 10,650 MBBS seats and 41 medical colleges

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has approved 10,650 new MBBS seats for the academic year 2024-25.

This increase is part of a broader strategy to enhance the availability of medical education in India.

The addition of 41 new medical colleges has also brought the total number of medical institutions in the country to 816.

According to NMC Chief Abhijat Sheth, of the 170 applications received for expanding undergraduate (UG) seats, comprising 41 from government colleges and 129 from private institutions, a total of 10,650 MBBS seats were approved.

This will raise the overall MBBS seat count to 1,37,600 for 2024-25, including seats in Institutes of National Importance.

The commission expects an increase of around 5,000 PG seats, taking the total to 67,000 PG seats nationwide. The overall increase in both UG and PG seats this year will be approximately 15,000.

The final approval process and counselling procedures will be completed within the prescribed timelines.

The portal for 2025-26 applications will open in November.

Plans are underway for a collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to strengthen research infrastructure. —*PTI*

Rains batter Kerala; orange alert in 6 districts

T'PURAM, 19 OCT

Heavy rain continued to lash Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry on Sunday, flooding several areas and prompting multiple weather alerts. The India Meteorological

Department issued an orange alert for Kerala's Ernakulam, Idukki, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragod districts, while others remain on yellow alert. Idukki was worst affected, with floods and mudslides forcing residents into relief camps.

Rising water levels at the Mullaperiyar dam led to the release of 1,400 cusecs of water through 13 spillway shutters.

In Tamil Nadu, heavy rainfall is expected over the next 24 hours in Coimbatore, Nilgiris, Erode, Tiruppur, Theni and Tenkasi, while Chennai may see light to moderate rain with thunderstorms.

A low-pressure area forming over the Southeast Bay of Bengal around 21 October may intensify further. Fishermen across Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Lakshadweep have been warned not to venture into the sea due to rough weather and strong winds. People were asked to be on alert. —*PTI*

Man kills pregnant ex-lover; her husband kills him

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

A pregnant woman, Shalini, 22, was fatally stabbed by her former live-in partner, Aashu alias Shailendra, 34, in Delhi's Nabi Karim area.

The incident occurred around 10.15pm on Saturday while Shalini and her husband, Aakash, 23, were en route to visit her mother on Qutub Road. Aashu attacked Aakash with a knife; after dodging the first blow, Aashu turned his attention to Shalini, who was in an e-rickshaw, and stabbed her multiple times.

Aakash intervened but was also injured. He managed to overpower Aashu, taking his knife and stabbing him during the struggle. Both Shalini and Aashu succumbed to their injuries at the hospital.

Shalini's mother revealed that her daughter had lived with Aashu, but had reconciled with Aakash, which allegedly angered Aashu. Aashu had a criminal background, while Aakash had incidents with police. —*PTI*

MAN WITH GUN CREATES PANIC AT TASLIMA NASRIN EVENT

KOCHI, 19 OCT

A man armed with a gun triggered a brief security scare at an atheist gathering in Kochi, where renowned writer Taslima Nasrin was slated to speak. The incident prompted law enforcement to evacuate hundreds from the Rajiv Gandhi Indoor Stadium and conduct thorough inspections.

A police officer reported, "Nothing suspicious was found. It was a licensed gun and the man carried it because of his ignorance. But we conducted the check as part of standard procedure. There is no other threat."

As participants, including many women, awaited outside, police completed their security measures. The event, described as an annual gathering for atheists and free thinkers, is expected to highlight various issues of secularism and free expression. Nasrin's presence adds significant prominence to the occasion. —*PTI*

Court terms bail plea in POSCO case bulky

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

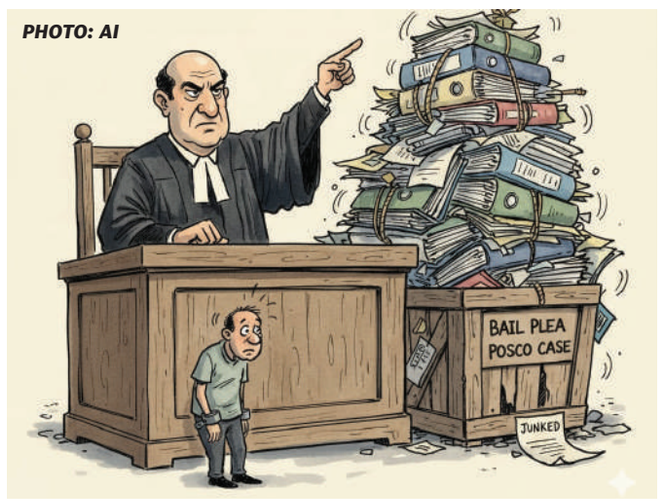
A Delhi court has rejected the bail application of an accused in a POCSO case, observing that the nearly 500-page plea was excessively long and would consume valuable judicial time.

Special Judge Rakesh Kumar, while passing the order on October 17, noted that the defence counsel had submitted a "voluminous" bail petition with extensive annexure.

The judge remarked that going through such a bulky document was impractical, especially when the court was already burdened with the disposal of numerous pending cases.

The accused is facing charges under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

PHOTO: AI



The court's decision highlights the importance of concise and focused legal submissions, emphasising that lengthy and unnecessarily detailed applications only delay proceedings and strain the judicial process. —*PTI*

STILL SEEKING ANSWERS

A month on, Assam mourns Zubeen's death

GUWAHATI, 19 OCT

Even after the passage of a month after the death of cultural icon Zubeen Garg, people of Assam continued to mourn the loss, seeking answers on the final moments of the singer.

Garg died while swimming in the sea in Singapore on 19 September

Garg's wife, Garima, said the family, along with the people of the state, are waiting to know what happened in his final moments, and expressed faith in the legal system to unravel the truth.

Hundreds thronged Garg's cremation site at Sonapur, on the outskirts of Guwahati on Sunday to pay tributes to their beloved singer-composer.

Zubeen Garg's wife Garima said that the family and the public are waiting to know what occurred in his final moments **PHOTO: PTI**

Fans and friends of the singer-composer also visited his residence at Kahilipara and his studio in Zoo Road.

Vedic rituals were organised by the family at his studio, with Garg's father, wife, sister and others joining it.

Garima said, " People of Assam are waiting to know what happened in his last moments."

Italian opera singer Gioconda Vessichelli, with whom Garg had collaborated for his yet-to-be released movie, also reached Guwahati to pay tributes to him.

"Zubeen da used to say that she (Garima) is his tigress, who stood by him in good and bad times. And he was right," Vessichelli said.

Fans came in private cars and buses to be at the final resting site of Garg..

People brought 'gamosas' (Assamese scarf) with lyrics of his songs written, his photographs and other items, besides lighting earthen lamps and incense sticks, in front of his cremation site.

Fans raised slogans like 'Joi Zubeen' and 'Justice for Zubeen' at the site. —*PTI*

Jains buy 186 luxury cars, get Rs 21 cr discount

AHMEDABAD, 19 OCT

The Jain community has showcased its substantial purchasing power by acquiring 186 high-end vehicles, securing discounts totalling Rs 21 crore (£2.1 million). This unique initiative was facilitated by the Jain International Trade Organisation (JITO), according to vice president Himanshu Shah.

The luxury cars, priced between Rs 60 lakh and Rs 1.3 crore each, were delivered to members across India from January to June this year. Shah stated, "JITO is merely a facilitator and did not profit from this deal," highlighting that most buyers were based in Gujarat.

The initiative emerged when members sought to leverage their combined buying power, prompting direct negotiations with different car brands including BMW, Audi, and Mercedes. —*PTI*

DEEPAVALI FEATURING OP SINDOOR

Kolkata's fireworks market is buzzing on the eve of Deepavali and Kali pooja with stalls embracing the success of the Indian armed forces' Operation Sindoor. Inspired by the operation, vendors are showcasing products resembling helicopters, drones and shells. Manufacturers from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have come up with their own varieties of fireworks with strategic naming and military designs. Operation Sindoor was conducted in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Experts give tips on pollution protection

People buy firecrackers at a market for the 'Diwali' festival celebrations, in Kanpur ***PHOTO: PTI***

The festival of lights fills homes with joy, colour and celebration, but it also brings an unwelcome guest called pollution.

The combination of firecracker smoke, increased particulate matter and changing weather leads to a surge in respiratory issues, skin irritation, and fatigue.

Experts across the wellness and nutrition space shared how small changes in lifestyle, diet and environment can help you stay healthy through the festivities.

Nutrition plays a crucial role in protecting the body from pollution-related stress, they said.

Lavleen Kaur, chief dietitian and founder, Santushti Holistic Health and Diet Insight Academy, advised limiting outdoor exposure during peak hours and staying hydrated with herbal teas or tulsi-infused water.

"Including antioxidant-rich foods like amla, haldi milk, and ghee-roasted dry fruits helps flush out toxins and strengthen immunity," she said.

Air quality during Deepavali can dip drastically, impacting even healthy individuals, experts highlighted.

Suresh Garg, CMD and founder, Zeon LifeSciences, recommended avoiding high-smoke crackers and using N95 masks when stepping outdoors.

He added, "Simple habits like consuming herbal infusions with turmeric, tulsi, or ginger can go a long way in supporting respiratory health."

The festive season also challenges the body with excess indulgence and toxin exposure.

Functional nutritionist Mugdha Pradhan, CEO and founder, iThrive, suggested boosting the intake of antioxidants through vitamin C-rich fruits, turmeric, and ginger. "Adequate sleep, hydration, and good ventilation are essential to help the body recover and detoxify naturally," she said.

To maintain lung health amid poor air quality, Aman Puri, founder, Steadfast Nutrition, recommended shifting workouts indoors.

"Practice yoga or breathing exercises at home, use air purifiers, and include foods like turmeric, mint, and cardamom that clear mucus and ease respiratory irritation," he said that besides air quality, festive noise can also affect well-being.

Yashna Garg, founder, Yugap Wellness, pointed out that "the constant noise can disturb sleep, which in turn reflects on our skin." She recommended creating a calm sleep environment using earplugs, blackout curtains, and natural, melatonin-based supplements to support overnight skin repair.

As the celebrations light up the skies, a few mindful choices from nutrition and rest to air quality management can help you safeguard your health and enjoy a radiant, pollution-free Deepavali, experts said. *—PTI*

A woman's curse: HP village says no to celebrations

Asati's curse means the Sammoo village of Hamirpur district will not celebrate Deepavali even this year, a tradition it has followed for many centuries.

The deliberate darkening on the day of the festival of lights has been followed by the locals ever since a woman burned herself on her husband's pyre and cursed the day, Veena Devi, a deputy to the village head, said on Saturday.

The villagers in Sammoo, about 25km from the district headquarters, at the most are allowed to light diyas, but there is a tacit understanding against the bursting of crackers and indulge in extravagance.

Any deviation from the norm forbodes a disaster, locals say.

According to the villagers, a few hundred years ago, a pregnant woman was preparing for Deepavali when the body of her husband, a soldier in the local king's army, was brought home. Disraught, the woman threw herself into the man's cremation fire.

But before she departed, she pronounced a curse, saying the people of the village would never be able to celebrate Deepavali.

Whenever they try to celebrate the day, either someone dies or some disaster strikes the village, said Thakur Bidhii Chand, an elderly villager.

Attempts have been made to undo the curse through 'havan' and other rituals, but in vain, he said.

Three years ago, villagers performed a huge 'yajna', but the power of the curse still grips them, said another villager, Vijay Kumar.

Despite long years, the sway of the curse is such that many do not even leave their homes on the day. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

Deepavali: Mithai, gadgets, & wellness gifts fill up bags

It is the season of giving, and wrapped in glittering paper and tied with a bow, Deepavali gifts are here to make the festive moments a little bit brighter and happier.

From artisanal mithai boxes and dry fruit hampers to luxury candles, spiritual kits, home décor accents, and the latest tech gadgets, shoppers are making the most of the festive season and reduced GST, balancing thoughtfulness with budget.

And, as it does every year, the Deepavali rush is in full swing: roads jammed, shops bursting at the seams, and last-minute buyers scrambling to find that elusive, perfect gift.

Riding the festive wave alongside shoppers, retailers are giving the season their stamp of approval. For instance, Gulshan Group is witnessing a remarkable surge in footfalls and sales in its Noida mall.

"We've seen nearly a 25–30 per cent increase in overall footfall across our mall and markets compared to last year... The reduction in GST, particularly on select lifestyle and electronic goods, has had a noticeable impact, driving a 15–20 per cent increase in high-value purchases.

"Overall, this Deepavali has brought back a strong festive momentum, turning malls into vibrant social hubs," Yukti Nagpal, director of Gulshan Group, told PTI.

Home maker Pooja Sharma is among the shoppers soaking in the festive energy.

"I've been shopping for gifts for my family and friends all week. Due to the GST reduction, items that were usually out of reach came within budget this time. What hasn't changed is the bewildering array of choices and the ensuing confusion," said Sharma.

The tried-and-tasted sweets section continues to top shoppers' lists, whether as a main gift or a complement to other offerings.

While at Khoya Mithai, traditional sweets still dominate festive hampers, with nearly "60–70 per cent" of consumers preferring mithai and dry fruits; Bakingo, an online bakery brand, noted a shift toward personalised hampers and fusion desserts that blend traditional Indian flavours with global influences, and is expecting "20–30 per cent growth" compared to last year.

Meanwhile, Manam Chocolate's high-end craft chocolates are emerging as an alternative to traditional sweets, appealing to consumers looking for indulgent and elevated gifting options. Shoppers are also turning to premium Pooja hampers and spiritual gifts -- from ready-to-use sacred essentials and idols to high-end personalised presents.

Poojashree, an e-commerce platform for Pooja essentials, is seeing its products flying off the shelves, particularly its newly launched 'Deepavali Pooja Kit'. Similarly, Ferns N Petals, a leading gifting brand, has witnessed an upward trend in demand for premium and personalised gifts.

Avik Kumar, chief marketing Officer at FNP, said personalised gifts -- from monogrammed boxes and engraved keepsakes to customised hampers -- have grown by "nearly 25 per cent".

Also high on shoppers' radar this Deepavali is the gift of health.

While immunity-boosting options like dry fruit boxes, turmeric teas, and spice kits are among the favourites, fitness subscriptions, coaching plans, and health gadgets are also seeing a surge in popularity.

Electronics and home appliances brand Sharp India has seen a "131 per cent rise" in demand for small, health-focused products such as car air purifiers, while fitness app FITTR is witnessing growing interest in coaching subscriptions, smart rings, and fitness plans.

Electronics as a category is enjoying bumper demand, largely due to the GST cut from 28 per cent to 18 per cent.

Products like smart projectors, portable monitors, and digital photo frames are emerging as preferred gifts with XElectron Technologies reporting a twofold growth in overall sales, including a notable increase in orders from Tier-3 cities.

Mimoh Jain, vice-president at Sharp India Appliances, also acknowledged the rise in sales of home appliances.

"Compared to last year, our air purifiers have gone up by almost 130 per cent, our refrigerators have grown by more than 240 per cent, washing machines have more than doubled, and dehumidifiers have seen a rise of 117 per cent," he explained.

Also revelling in the festive spirit are alcohol brands, as many consumers move away from conventional gifts and opt for premium spirits to add cheer to the celebrations.

Leading breweries and distilleries, including Radico Khaitan and Globus Spirits, are reporting strong demand and robust sales, with new variants and festive packs launched to cater to the season. *—PTI*

And, as it does every year, the Deepavali rush is in full swing: shops bursting at the seams, and last-minute buyers scrambling to find that elusive, perfect gift at Sadar Bazaar in New Delhi ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

This Deepavali, Delhi potters craft a new story of light with AI

This Deepavali, as the potters of Delhi's Kumhar Colony work late into the night shaping and painting diyas, the younger members of the community are adding an unexpected tool to the craft -- artificial intelligence (AI).

What began as curiosity has become a quiet experiment in creativity, blending centuries-old traditions with the imagination of the digital age.

The prices of the diyas (earthen lamps) here range from one rupee to thousands, depending on their size and other details. The small, simple ones are sold in bulk to local markets, while intricately-painted or customised lamps fetch higher prices from buyers seeking something unique.

This year, a few families have seen a new kind of creativity among their younger members, who are experimenting with AI for colour and pattern ideas.

"Sometimes it comes up with very odd ideas, but sometimes it gives really good ones. We do not copy everything it says, we use our own touch, but it helps us think differently," Yash said.

For younger potters, technology is a small but useful tool, especially when preparing for large orders and in search of fresh ideas.

"It is not like we let it decide everything. We just ask for ideas. The final design still comes from our hands," Yash said.

This year, a few families have seen a new kind of creativity among their younger members, who are experimenting with AI for colour and pattern ideas ***PHOTO: PTI***

For older artisans though, this new approach feels unfamiliar and unnecessary. Banwari Lal, 62, who has been making diyas since childhood, said he prefers to rely on traditional methods passed down through generations.

Sitting nearby, Raghunath, 58, who has worked with clay his whole life, said technology cannot replace skill or intuition.

"The diya listens to your hands, not to a machine," he said, adding, "Clay has its own life. You have to feel it to know when it is ready. No computer can teach that."

Still, some artisans believe that the younger generation's curiosity may bring long-term benefits to the craft.

Dheeraj, 54, who runs a small workshop in the colony, said AI has not made a big difference yet but can help attract more customers.

"Right now, it is just something new they are playing with, but maybe in the future, it will help us reach new buyers. People like seeing different designs," he said.

Dheeraj believes that blending traditional skills with modern ideas can help the community survive in an increasingly-competitive market.

"There are so many ready-made, machine-made items in stores now. If we want to keep our handmade work alive, new ideas like this might help," he added.

This Deepavali season has brought its own difficulties. The unexpected early-October rain has damaged a large portion of the potters' ready stock.

"We have lost around 20 per cent of our diyas," Dheeraj said. "We had kept them out to dry and did not expect any rain. It came suddenly and by morning, many of the diyas had gone soft. Once that happens, you cannot sell those. We had to throw away all the trays."

The losses have been hard to recover from, especially with the festival so close.

"We earn most of our income in this one month," said Banwari. "When the diyas get spoiled, we have to start again from the scratch. But there is no choice. We work till late at night to make up for it," he said.

Even with the setbacks, the lanes of Kumhar Colony are busy and bright. Rows of diyas line the narrow pathways, glistening in the fading sunlight. The rhythmic sound of clay wheels fills the air as the smell of drying earth mixes with paint and varnish. Children run between houses carrying trays of freshly-painted lamps, while elders sit nearby, shaping new ones for the next batch.

Watching his younger helpers at work, Banwari smiled faintly.

"Maybe, times are changing," he said. "We used to learn by looking at our elders. Now they learn by looking at screens. But if their hands stay in the clay, our tradition will survive."

Dipping a brush into a bowl of golden paint, Yashpal agreed.

"AI just gives us ideas. The real work still happens here, in our hands. The diya may start on a screen, but it is finished in the clay," he said.

As Deepavali approaches, the potters of Kumhar Colony continue to work through the long evenings, shaping and painting thousands of diyas that will light up homes across the city. Between tradition and technology, they are finding new ways to keep their craft alive. *—PTI*

- Even with the setbacks, the lanes of Kumhar Colony are busy and bright. Rows of diyas line the narrow pathways, glistening in the fading sunlight. The rhythmic sound of clay wheels fills the air as the smell of drying earth mixes with paint and varnish. Children run between houses carrying trays of freshly-painted lamps, while elders sit nearby, shaping new ones for the next batch.

‘No Kings’ anti-Trump rally shakes up US

Thousands rally in Boston and Idaho against Trump’s immigration and human rights policies; protesters form human mural, hold anti-Trump banners

PHOTO: SREENGRAB AND INSTAGRAM/@PASCALISPUN

Massive protests in New York, Boston, Atlanta, Chicago

WASHINGTON, 19 OCT

Thousands took to the streets across the US on Saturday for “No Kings” protests, opposing what they see as President Donald Trump’s authoritarian shift. Demonstrations took place in major cities including New York, Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Washington, as well as smaller towns like Billings, Montana.

Protesters held signs reading “Resist Fascism” and “Nothing is more patriotic than protesting,” while the atmosphere often resembled a street party, with marching bands, inflatable frog costumes, and a giant “We the People” banner available for public signatures.

The third mass mobilisation since Trump’s return to the White House comes amid a government shutdown, which has halted federal services and strained the balance of power.

Protest organisers say Trump’s actions—such as immigration detentions without due process and domestic troop deployments—signal a slide into authoritarianism.

In Washington, Iraq War veteran and former CIA officer Shawn Howard said it was his first protest. “I fought extremists abroad. Now I see extremists here, pushing us towards civil conflict,” he warned.

Trump, spending the weekend at Mar-a-Lago, dismissed the events. “I’m not a king,” he told Fox News, though his campaign later mocked protesters with a video of him wearing a crown.

From spelling out “No King!” on San Francisco’s Ocean Beach to holding vigils in Salt Lake City after a protester was killed in June, the nationwide movement spanned over 2,600 events.

In Birmingham, Alabama, where Trump won nearly 65 per cent of the vote, over 1,500 rallied.

Organisers say the protests are unifying the opposition. “We the people will rule,” Senator Bernie Sanders told crowds in Washington. Republicans, however, labelled the events “Hate America rallies,” accusing participants of Marxism and blaming them for the ongoing shutdown. *—PTI*

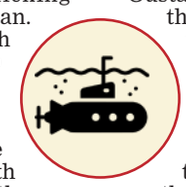
Don dumps trash on protesters in AI video

After a day of golfing as nationwide protests unfolded, President Donald Trump shared an AI-generated video showing himself as “King Trump” piloting a fighter jet over Times Square, dumping brown liquid on demonstrators to the soundtrack of ‘Danger Zone’. The video, posted on his personal and official accounts, sparked outrage. Vice President JD Vance too shared imagery of Trump crowned, with Democrats kneeling.

US bombs ‘narco-sub’ in Caribbean, kills two

WASHINGTON, 19 OCT

President Donald Trump has claimed it was his “great honour” to destroy a suspected drug-carrying submarine heading toward the US via a known narco-trafficking route in the Caribbean. The strike, which killed two and left two survivors, is the sixth such attack since early September.



Trump asserted the vessel was “loaded with mostly fentanyl and other illegal narcotics” and that “at least 25,000 Americans would have died” had it reached US shores. The two surviving crew members, from Ecuador and Colombia, will be repatriated for prosecution, avoiding legal ambiguity over their status under US law.

The Pentagon released black-and-white footage of the strike, showing explosions as the partially submerged craft was hit.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro condemned the operation, accusing the US of violating Colombian sovereignty and killing a fisherman in a prior September strike.

Trump is justifying the operations under the post-9/11 legal framework used against terror groups. Critics, including legal scholars and members of Congress, argue this stretches international law. So far, at least 29 people have been killed in US strikes. *—PTI*

CHINA ACCUSES US OF CYBERATTACK ON TIME CENTRE

BEIJING, 19 OCT

China accused the US NSA of cyberattacks on its National Time Service Centre, warning such breaches could disrupt communications, finance, and power systems. The Ministry of State Security claimed the NSA exploited a foreign phone brand’s vulnerabilities in 2022 to steal staff data and used 42 cyber weapons to infiltrate internal systems between 2023 and 2024. No evidence was provided. Beijing criticised the US for cyber hypocrisy, heightening tensions amid ongoing trade, technology, and Taiwan disputes. *—PTI*

ARTILLERY FIRED OVER CALI H’WAY DURING VANCE VISIT

CALIFORNIA, 19 OCT

A military event attended by US Vice President JD Vance sparked outrage after live artillery was fired over California’s I-5 highway. Governor Gavin Newsom condemned the action, ordering a 27km stretch closed, citing public safety. Despite Marine assurances of routine, safe training, overhead fire prompted road and rail shutdowns. The event, marking the Marine Corps’ 250th anniversary at Camp Pendleton, caused severe delays. Vance’s office dismissed concerns, accusing Newsom of politicising military readiness. *—PTI*

Palestinians walk among destroyed buildings in Gaza City PHOTO: PTI

Hamas plans to attack Palestinians: US warns

WEST PALM BEACH, 19 OCT

The US State Department has warned that Hamas may be planning an attack on Palestinian civilians in Gaza, calling it a ‘grave violation’ of the agreement forged by President Donald Trump to end the two-year war between Israel and Hamas, the statement said.

The department said it has received credible reports of such plans and vowed to take measures to protect the people of Gaza and preserve the integrity of the ceasefire.

President Donald Trump, who earlier cautioned Hamas against further violence, said the US would not send troops into Gaza but hinted that regional allies could act under our auspices if hostilities resume.

The warning came as Hamas handed over the remains of two hostages to the Red Cross. Israel identified one body as Ronen Engel, killed in the 7 October, Hamas attack on Kibbutz Nir Oz. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Rafah crossing with Egypt will remain closed until further notice, pending Hamas’s return of all 28 deceased hostages. So far, 11 have been handed over, while Israel has returned 135 Palestinian bodies to Gaza.

The war has killed over 68,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, and about 1,200 people in Israel. Thousands remain missing as Gaza’s truce faces renewed strain and uncertainty. *—PTI*

Pak urges action against TTP amid ceasefire with Afghan

ISLAMABAD, 19 OCT

- Islamabad accused the TTP of launching cross-border attacks from Afghan soil, citing a recent deadly assault in Orakzai, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which killed 11 soldiers.

Pakistan has called on the Afghan Taliban authorities to take verifiable action against the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) during talks in Doha, amid ongoing efforts to de-escalate border tensions.

Islamabad accused the TTP of launching cross-border attacks from Afghan soil, citing a recent deadly assault in Orakzai, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which killed 11 soldiers, including a Lt Colonel and a Major.

Pakistan’s Foreign Office stressed the need for Kabul to honour its international commitments and address Pakistan’s legitimate security concerns.

It also welcomed the mediation by Qatar, expressing hope the talks would contribute to lasting regional stability.

A temporary 48-hour ceasefire was first announced on Wednesday and later extended on Friday.

However, just hours after the extension, Pakistan conducted fresh airstrikes targeting alleged terrorist hideouts inside Afghanistan following a TTP-claimed attack in North Waziristan.

The strikes reportedly killed several people, including three Afghan cricketers, prompting the Afghanistan Cricket Board to withdraw from the upcoming Tri-Nation T20I Series in Pakistan.

On Saturday, Pakistan’s Army Chief, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, issued warning to Kabul to make a choice between “peace and chaos,” and urged for immediate action against militants operating from Afghan territory. *—PTI*

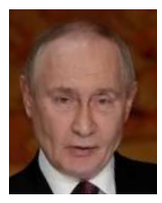
Putin wants Ukraine’s key region for peace

MOSCOW, 19 OCT

Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a recent call with US President Donald Trump, demanded Ukraine cede full control of Donetsk to end the war, two senior officials told the Washington Post.

Putin’s focus on Donetsk, partly occupied by Russia and its proxies since 2014, highlights his steadfast territorial ambitions.

Trump did not endorse the demand and later met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, urging both sides to “stop the killing and make a deal.”



Officials said Putin offered to surrender parts of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson in exchange for Donetsk, a scaled-back version of earlier demands. Some US aides viewed it as limited progress, though European diplomats dismissed it as “selling Ukraine its own leg.”

Ukraine had hoped for advanced Tomahawk missiles but left Washington empty-handed. Trump stressed diplomacy, aiming to end the war without deploying them.

The White House and Kremlin have not commented. Russia’s full-scale invasion, launched in February 2022, remains stalled along largely static front lines, with Moscow controlling roughly 20% of Ukrainian territory.

Analysts say the ongoing stalemate underscores the difficulty of negotiating a peace deal acceptable to both sides. *—ANI*

Oppn in Taiwan elects leader amid China meddling

TAIPEI, 19 OCT

Taiwan’s main opposition party, the China-friendly Kuomintang (KMT), elected reformist Cheng Li-wun as its new chair on Saturday, defeating five rivals including ex-Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin. Cheng, the only woman in the race and a former DPP member, pledged to transform the KMT into a party of “lions” and criticised President Lai Ching-te’s defence spending plans.

Cheng takes office in November and will shape KMT’s stance ahead of Taiwan’s 2026 local and 2028 presidential elections. Her win comes amid allegations of Chinese interference, with Taiwan’s National Security Bureau citing over 1,000 TikTok videos and 23 YouTube accounts influencing the vote, many from abroad.

Beijing, which sees Taiwan as its own territory, denied involvement, while Cheng dismissed the claims as “cheap labels.” The DPP warned against foreign influence, urging Cheng to prioritise Taiwan’s security. Cheng vowed to act as a peacemaker. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Limp Bizkit Bassist Sam Rivers dies at 48

LOS ANGELES, 19 OCT

Sam Rivers, the bassist and founding member of the American nu metal band Limp Bizkit, has died at the age of 48, as confirmed by the band’s members on Instagram. They posted a tribute saying, “Today we lost our brother. Our bandmate. Our heartbeat. Sam Rivers wasn’t just our bass player — he was pure magic... a legend of legends.” Rivers, who joined Limp Bizkit in 1994, had left the band in 2015 for health reasons but returned in 2018 after a liver transplant. The cause of his death remains unknown. Limp Bizkit is slated to commence their “Gringo Papi” Tour on 29 November. *—PTI*

Florida leader’s anti-Indian remark invites criticism

WASHINGTON, 19 OCT

Palm Bay Councilman Chandler Langevin has faced sharp backlash over social media posts calling for the deportation of Indian Americans. “America for Americans,” he wrote, urging Trump to revoke Indian visas. His comments sparked outrage from Indian-American groups and lawmakers, with calls for his resignation. The city council voted 3–2 to censure Langevin, limiting his duties and silencing him during meetings. National advocacy group Hindus for Human Rights urged Florida Governor Ron DeSantis to remove him. Republican figures, including Sen Rick Scott and Rep Mike Haridopolos, condemned the remarks. Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi called Langevin’s rhetoric “dangerous.” Despite an apology to “patriotic Hindus,” Langevin defended his stance on immigration and refused to resign. Florida has around 210,000 Indian-origin residents. *—PTI*

Lahore tops world’s most polluted cities’ list

LAHORE, 19 OCT

Lahore has been named the most polluted city globally, with an Air Quality Index (AQI) hitting 274, according to recent global air monitoring data. Certain areas recorded alarming AQI levels, such as Allama Iqbal Town at 459. The average AQI in the city remains in the “unhealthy” category. Officials have cautioned residents, especially vulnerable groups, to limit outdoor activities. In response, the Punjab government has initiated an anti-smog operation, which reportedly reduced pollution levels by 70 per cent in the Kahna area. The rise in pollution is attributed to various environmental factors, including unchecked urban development and weather conditions. *—ANI*

China launches Pak’s remote sensing satellite

BEIJING, 19 OCT

China on Sunday launched a Pakistani remote sensing satellite along with two of its own onboard a single rocket, further deepening space cooperation between the two all-weather allies. A Lijian-1 Y8 carrier rocket carrying three satellites, Pakistan remote-sensing satellite (PRSS-2), AIRSAT 03 and 04 satellites, was launched from a commercial aerospace innovation pilot zone in northwest China, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The satellites were successfully placed in the planned orbit, it said. This is the third Pakistani satellite launched by China this year. Earlier, it launched Pakistan Remote Sensing Satellite (PRSS-1) in July and PRSC-EO1 in January. *—PTI*

GENDER PARITY REDUCED

133M girls still out of school globally: UN

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

PHOTO: UNESCO

- Over the past three decades, 91 million more girls have entered primary education and 136 million more are enrolled in secondary school. Women’s tertiary enrolment has tripled, from 41 million to 139 million.

The world has made significant strides toward gender parity in education since the 1995 Beijing Declaration, but at least 133 million girls remain out of school, according to UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring (GEM) team.

Over the past three decades, 91 million more girls have entered primary education and 136 million more are enrolled in secondary school. Women’s tertiary enrolment has tripled, from 41 million to 139 million. “These numbers reflect progress, but the picture is far from complete,” a team member said.

Central and Southern Asia achieved parity in secondary enrolment, but sub-Saharan Africa lags behind. Oceania now shows girls at a disadvantage, while in Latin America and the Caribbean, boys are less likely to finish secondary school. In countries like Guinea and Mali, nearly no poor young women are in school.

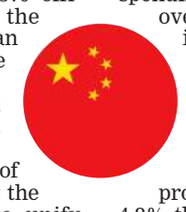
UNESCO warned that education systems still perpetuate inequality. Sexuality education is not mandatory in one-third of countries, and textbooks often reinforce stereotypes. Although women form most of the global teaching workforce, they hold only 30 per cent of higher education leadership roles.

The report urged governments to make curricula gender-transformative, expand sexuality education, prevent violence, and promote women into leadership. “The unfinished business of education is about rights and futures,” UNESCO said. *—PTI*

China’s ruling party meets to map out 5-year plan

BEIJING, 19 OCT

China’s Communist Party will hold its fourth plenum from Monday, a key closed-door meeting where President Xi Jinping and around 370 officials will finalise the nation’s five-year plan for 2026–2030. The blueprint sets economic and political priorities for the next five years.



The plenum, one of seven sessions during the party’s term, aims to unify officials and the public behind national goals. Details will be officially released at the National People’s Congress next March, with no major strategic shifts expected.

The upcoming plan focuses on sustaining growth amid US trade tensions, domestic economic pressures, and demographic changes. Priorities include boosting consumer spending, reducing industrial overcapacity, and achieving technological self-sufficiency, particularly in AI and chip production, in response to US export controls.

China’s economy is projected to grow around 4.8% this year but faces challenges such as a struggling property sector and high youth unemployment. The 15th five-year plan will chart the course for its economic development from 2026 to 2030.

GSTR-3B tax filing deadline extended to 25 Oct

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

The government has granted a five-day extension for filing the monthly GSTR-3B tax payment form, moving the deadline to 25 October. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) announced the change through an official notification and a post on X. The extension applies to all taxpayers filing the GSTR-3B summary return for September, as well as those making quarterly submissions for the July-September period. The move provides welcome relief to businesses and registered taxpayers, as the original due date of 20 October coincided with Deepavali. Authorities said the extension ensures adequate time for compliance while accommodating the festive period, making filing process smoother and less stressful for all filers. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

India's automobile exports jump by 26% in Q2

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

India's automobile exports rose 26 per cent year-on-year in the September quarter, driven by record shipments of passenger vehicles, two-wheelers, and three-wheelers, according to the industry body, Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). Passenger vehicle exports grew 23 per cent to 2.41 lakh units, led by Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai. Two-wheeler exports surged 25 per cent to 12.95 lakh units, with motorcycle shipments rising 27 per cent. Three-wheeler exports also saw a sharp 51 per cent jump to 1.23 lakh units, while commercial vehicle exports rose 22 per cent. Overall exports reached 16.85 lakh units, up from 13.35 lakh last year. SIAM President Shailesh Chandra said the growth reflects stronger global demand for made-in-India vehicles. *—PTI*

Reliance to start solar power project in Kutch

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Reliance Industries will begin solar power generation in the first half of FY27 from its massive renewable energy project in Kutch, Gujarat, spanning 5,50,000 acres, nearly three times the size of Singapore. The project is part of the company's push towards clean energy and its goal to achieve net-zero emissions by 2035. Reliance said commissioning will start next year for captive use and green fuel production. The Kutch project forms a key part of the Dhirubhai Ambani Green Energy Giga Complex, which also includes solar PV, battery storage, and green hydrogen manufacturing. The firm is progressing rapidly on its 40 GWh battery energy storage giga-factory to ensure round-the-clock clean power. *—PTI*

Meesho files IPO papers to raise Rs 4,250 crore

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

SoftBank-backed e-commerce firm Meesho has filed draft papers with Sebi to raise Rs 4,250 crore through an initial public offering (IPO). The offer includes a fresh issue of shares worth Rs 4,250 crore and an offer for sale by existing investors such as Elevation, Peak XV, Venture Highway and Y Combinator. Proceeds will fund investments in cloud infrastructure, AI and technology development, marketing, and potential acquisitions. Kotak, JP Morgan, Morgan Stanley, Axis, and Citi are the lead managers. Meesho reported a 29 per cent rise in net merchandise value to Rs 29,988 crore in FY25, maintaining strong growth momentum despite posting a one-time loss of Rs 3,942 crore. *—PTI*

Calcutta Stock Exchange to shutdown after 117 years

Sebi suspended trading at CSE in April 2013 for non-compliance

KOLKATA, 19 OCT

The Calcutta Stock Exchange (CSE), one of India's oldest bourses, may this year celebrate its last Kali Pooja and Deepavali on 20 October, as a functioning exchange, with the process of voluntary exit as a bourse nearing completion after a decade-long legal battle.

Trading at CSE was suspended by Sebi in April 2013 following regulatory non-compliance. After years of efforts to revive operations and contest SEBI directives in courts, the exchange has now decided to back out of the business and seek a voluntary exit from its stock exchange licence.

"Approval has also been obtained from the shareholders vide EGM dated 25 April, 2025 relating to the exit of the stock exchange business. Accordingly, CSE submitted the exit application to SEBI, which has, in turn, appointed a valuation agency for undertaking the valuation of stock exchange which is in progress," CSE Chairman Deepankar Bose said.

Once Sebi grants exit approval for stock exchange business, CSE will function as a holding company, while its 100 per cent subsidiary, CSE Capital Markets Pvt Ltd, will continue broking as a member of NSE and BSE.

Founded in 1908, the 117-year-old institution once rivalled the BSE in trading volumes and stood as a symbol of Kolkata's financial heritage.

The institution once rivalled the BSE in trading volumes and stood as a symbol of Kolkata's financial heritage *PHOTO: ANI*

The decline began after the Rs 120-crore Ketan Parekh-linked scam triggered a payment crisis at CSE, as several brokers defaulted on settlement obligations.

In December 2024, CSE's board resolved to withdraw its pending cases and applied for voluntary exit. *—PTI*

SWIGGY, MAGICPIN SEE RISE IN ORDER

Food delivery platforms Swiggy and magicpin have reported a sharp surge in orders as India celebrates the festive season, underscoring the central role of food in national festivities and celebrations. magicpin expects to double last year's orders during the Deepavali rush, with CEO Anshoo Sharma noting a nearly 40 per cent rise in vegetarian and thali orders around Navratri across their active markets. Swiggy's data shows Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Kolkata leading in demand, with emerging hubs like Surat and Vadodara included. *—PTI*

Non-metro cities may drive online Deepavali sales

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Non-metro cities have emerged as the powerhouse of this year's online Diwali shopping, accounting for nearly three-quarters of the total e-commerce volume, with tier 3 cities alone contributing over 50 per cent, according to a report by logistics platform ClickPost.

Analysis of over 42.5 million shipments revealed that tier 3 cities represented 50.7 per cent of all orders, while tier 2 cities contributed 24.8 per cent, culminating in a combined share of 74.7 per cent for non-metro regions. Demand was further heightened by festivities such as Durga Puja and Karwa Chauth, resulting in a notable increase in fashion and cosmetic purchases.

India's logistics networks maintained an average delivery time of 2.83 days, with same-day hyperlocal deliveries increasing by 42 per cent year-on-year.

Naman Vijay, co-founder and CEO of ClickPost, stated, "We're entering a new era of Indian retail... Investments in speed, fulfilment, inventory intelligence, and localised offers are absolutely foundational." *—PTI*

The decline in US-bound exports followed the Trump administration's decision to impose a 50 per cent tariff on Indian good *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

India's exports to US decline by 11.9%, says Crisil

KOLKATA, 19 OCT

India's exports to the United States have contracted, while shipments to non-US destinations have remained robust, surpassing previous growth figures, rating agency Crisil said in its report for October.

According to the report, merchandise exports to the US had shown a degrowth by 11.9 per cent to USD 5.5 billion in September, after recording a 7 per cent growth in August 2025.

The agency noted that without the frontloading of shipments ahead of the tariff hike, the fall would have been sharper.

In contrast, exports to non-US markets expanded by 10.9 per cent in September, accelerating from 6.6 per cent growth in August 2025, it said.

The decline in US-bound exports followed the Trump administration's decision to impose a 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods, effective from 27 August.

Crisil cautioned that India's merchandise exports are facing headwinds from the US tariff hikes and a broader slowdown in global growth.

The World Trade Organisation has projected that global merchandise trade volumes will increase by 2.4 per cent in 2025, compared to 2.8 per cent in 2024.

Despite these challenges, Crisil expects India's current account deficit (CAD) to remain within manageable limits, supported by strong services exports, steady remittance inflows, and easing crude oil prices.

The CAD will be around 1 per cent of GDP in the current fiscal, up from 0.6 per cent in the previous year, it said in its forecast. *—PTI*

NCLT rejects TVS' insolvency plea against ZTE

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has dismissed an insolvency plea against ZTE Telecom India filed by TVS Supply Chain Solutions, citing a "pre-existing dispute" related to outstanding payments. The Chandigarh bench highlighted that the debt, amounting to Rs 4.27 crore, had been disputed and under reconciliation since 2017. The tribunal affirmed, "Insolvency proceedings cannot be misused to recover disputed claims," emphasising its limited role in assessing such matters.

In contrast, the Ahmedabad bench of the NCLT has admitted an insolvency case against Blu-Smart Mobility Tech due to an unpaid operational debt of Rs 5.84 crore owed to Lepton Software Export and Research. Pawan Kumar Goyal has been appointed as the interim resolution professional, while the company's board has been suspended. The NCLT stated, "The respondent/corporate debtor Blu-Smart Mobility Pvt Ltd is admitted in the Corporate Insolvency Resolution process," highlighting the ongoing financial issues faced by the company.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Blu-Smart, which provides all-electric ride-hailing services, disputes the operational debt and claims that invoices issued post-expiry of their agreement with Lepton are not valid. However, the NCLT noted the company's acknowledgment of some liabilities and stated that the operational ecosystem includes intertwined businesses under the Blu-Smart Group, indicating a concerted effort to maximise value across its subsidiaries during the insolvency resolution process. *—PTI*

DEBT MKT STAYS STEADY

After 3-month pullout streak, FPIs invest ₹6,480 cr

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have returned to Indian equities in October, investing Rs 6,480 crore, ending a three-month streak of net outflows.

This follows significant withdrawals of Rs 17,700 crore in July, Rs 34,990 crore in August, and Rs 23,885 crore in September, reflecting renewed global confidence in Indian markets. Analysts attribute the revival to India's strong macroeconomic fundamentals, including resilient economic growth, stable inflation, and robust domestic demand, which make the country stand out among emerging markets and attract global attention.

Easing global liquidity conditions, driven by expectations of a US rate pause or potential cuts, have also encouraged investors to return to higher-return emerging markets. The reduced valuation gap between Indian equities and other markets has prompted "dip-buying," while moderation in US-India trade tensions has further boosted investor sentiment. Experts note that the recent under-performance of Indian equities has created attractive opportunities for global investors seeking long-term gains, while domestic reforms continue to support investor confidence.

Despite the recent inflows, FPIs have still withdrawn approximately Rs 1.5 lakh crore so far in 2025. Meanwhile, interest in the Indian debt market remains steady, with Rs 5,332 crore invested this month alone. Looking ahead, the trajectory of FPI flows will be influenced by upcoming corporate earnings, broader global trade developments, and geopolitical trends.

Analysts said that India's strong fundamentals, comparatively attractive valuations, growing domestic consumption, and stable policy environment continue to make it a preferred destination for foreign funds seeking growth in emerging markets. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

- Despite the recent inflows, FPIs have still withdrawn approximately Rs 1.5 lakh crore so far in 2025.

Top 7 firms' mcap rises by Rs 2.16L crore

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most valued firms surged by Rs 2,16,544.29 crore last week, with Reliance Industries and Bharti Airtel stealing the limelight, in tandem with an optimistic trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,451.37 points or 1.75 per cent.

From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance and Hindustan Unilever were the gainers, while Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) faced erosion from their valuation.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries jumped Rs 47,363.65 crore to Rs 19,17,483.71 crore, the most among the top-10 firms.

Bharti Airtel added Rs 41,254.73 crore taking its valuation to Rs 11,47,235.08 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of ICICI Bank surged by Rs 40,123.88 crore to Rs 10,26,491.35 crore and that of HDFC Bank rallied Rs 33,185.59 crore to Rs 15,40,210.78 crore. The valuation of Bajaj Finance climbed Rs 28,903.45 crore to Rs 6,65,899.19 crore. *—PTI*

Global trends, earnings to guide markets this week: Analyst

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Equity market investors are set to monitor global trends, foreign fund movements, and quarterly earnings amidst a holiday-shortened week ahead, market analysts have indicated.

The BSE and NSE stock exchanges will host a special Muhurat trading session on Tuesday, 21 October, from 1.45pm to 2.45pm, while regular trading will be closed for Diwali Balipratipada on Wednesday.

"The truncated trading week will be event-heavy, with key triggers lined up for investors. Market participants will first react to quarterly earnings from heavyweights like Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank, which will likely set the tone for the broader market," stated Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research at Religare Broking Ltd.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Additionally, major companies such as Colgate, Hindustan Unilever, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, and SBI Life Insurance Company are expected to report results, providing further guidance.

Globally, developments surrounding US tariffs on China and fluctuations in crude oil prices will play a critical role in shaping investor sentiment.

After three months of selling, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have returned as buyers with Rs 6,480 crore invested in October so far.

According to Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst at Swastika Investmart, a potential easing of US–China trade tensions could boost market confidence. *—PTI*

- The BSE and NSE stock exchanges will host a special Muhurat trading session on Tuesday, 21 October, while regular trading will be closed for Diwali

RISKS REMAIN

Gold to stay high this year; rupee weak

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Gold prices in India are expected to maintain an upside bias for the rest of 2025, driven by a projected uptrend in global gold prices and a weakening Indian rupee, according to a sectoral update by ICICI Bank Global Markets.

The report projects an equilibrium range of USD/Rs at 87.00-89.00 for the fourth quarter of 2025 (Q4 2025) and the first half of 2026.

The report further added that the domestic gold prices are expected to trade between Rs 1,20,000 and Rs 1,35,000 per 10g through the remainder of 2025, and could rise further to Rs 1,30,000-Rs 1,45,000 in the first half of 2026.

However, risks remain tilted to the upside, particularly if the rupee weakens more than anticipated or global gold prices exceed current forecasts, the report added.

In India, the spot rate is currently around Rs 1.31 lakh per 10g on MCX.

The report added that the structural investment-related demand for the yellow metal is visible in ETF flows in gold that remained firm.

Domestic gold prices have risen by 16 per cent over the last month, driven by the rise in global prices and depreciation in the INR against the USD over the period. At the same time, gold imports picked up from USD 5.44bn in August to USD 9.6bn in September, showing that demand in the local markets remains firm.

The report further highlighted that the surge came as investors turned to gold amid weak stock market returns and persistent geopolitical uncertainty. *—ANI*

Glenmark, Dr Reddy's recall products in US

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Drug manufacturers Glenmark Pharma ceuticals and Dr Reddy's Laboratories are recalling products in the United States due to manufacturing issues, as reported by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA).

The latest Enforcement Report indicates that Glenmark Pharma ceuticals Inc, based in Mahwah, New Jersey, is recalling 26,928 packs of the oral contraceptive Viorele (Desogestrel and Ethinyl Estradiol, USP, 0.15 mg/0.02 mg) due to "failed impurities/degradation specifications." The affected lot was produced at Glenmark's Goa facility. The Class II nationwide recall was initiated on 3 September 2025.

Additionally, a subsidiary of Dr Reddy's Laboratories, located in Princeton, New Jersey, is recalling 571 vials of Succinylcholine Chloride Injection due to "out-of-specification results during the 6-month stability testing." This Class II recall was initiated on 26 September.

PHOTO: ANI

According to the USFDA, a Class II recall may result in temporary or medically reversible health consequences, with minimal likelihood of serious adverse health outcomes. *—PTI*

PAK vs SA, 2nd Test: Pakistan mulls third spinner

KARACHI, 19 OCT

Pakistan could include a third spinner against South Africa as the hosts try to sweep the series 2-0 in the second Test in Rawalpindi, head coach Azhar Mahmood said Sunday. Pakistan beat World Test champion South Africa by 93 runs inside four days last week, with spinners taking 34 of the 40 wickets on a turning Gaddafi Stadium pitch. Mahmood said either leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed or uncapped 38-year-old left-armer Asif Afridi could be called up for the second and final Test beginning on Monday on a dry Rawalpindi pitch. Left-armer Noman Ali took 10 wickets in the first Test while his spin partner Sajid Khan finished with six. With the pitch in Rawalpindi likely to turn more as the match goes on, Mahmood stressed that first innings runs will be crucial.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@LEYLAH

Leylah Fernandez wins Japan Open for her fifth title

OSAKA, 19 OCT

Leylah Fernandez beat 18-year-old qualifier Tereza Valentova 6-0, 5-7, 6-3 in the final of the WTA's Japan Open on Sunday for her fifth career title. Playing in her eighth career final, the one-time U.S. Open runner-up raced through the first set in 29 minutes, before Valentova settled her nerves in the second set and found a way to level the match when she broke Fernandez in the 12th game. In the deciding set, the 27th-ranked Fernandez made a crucial break in the fourth game and then saw off a late challenge by the Czech player to claim her second title of the season after taking the WTA 500 D.C. Open in July. —*PTI*

Sei Young Kim wins LPGA South Korea by 4 strokes

HAENAM, 19 OCT

Decade-long LPGA Tour veteran Sei Young Kim carded a final round 67 to hold off any final round challengers as she claimed a four-stroke victory at the BMW Ladies Championship on Sunday. It was Kim's 13th career title since joining the tour in 2015, and ended a five-year-long drought since her last tournament victory at the Women's PGA Championship in 2020. Kim, 32, finished with a four-round total of 24-under-264 at Pine Beach Golf Links on the Korean peninsula, with the South Korean only dropping a shot at the par-3 third before finding six birdies through the remainder of the round to comfortably hold her closest rival, Nasa Hataoka, at bay. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@TERTSCH

Lisa becomes world women's triathlon champion

WOLLONGONG, 19 OCT

Germany's Lisa Tertsch fulfilled her considerable potential, breaking away from a star-studded field Sunday to win the elite women's race at the World Triathlon Championship finals and to become world champion for the first time. Tertsch was near the head of the field for most of the 1.5-kilometer swim, 40-kilometer cycle, and 10-kilometer run, finishing strongly to beat Bianca Seregni of Italy by 14 seconds. Emma Lombardi of France finished third, 26 seconds behind Tertsch. Olympic champion Cassandre Beaugrand of France and Beth Potter of Britain came into the finals tied atop the world championship points standings with Tertsch in fourth place overall. —*PTI*

Australia's pace and Perth rain beat India hard in 1st ODI

Rohit plays just 14 balls and Virat gets his 1st duck against Aus

PERTH, 19 OCT

AXAR PATEL PHOTO: PTI

KL Rahul continues his fine run against Australia after top-scoring in Perth PHOTO: PTI

India's return to ODI action was hampered by persistent rain, sharp Australian bowling, and the early exits of returning veterans Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, as they slipped to a seven-wicket defeat in the first ODI at Optus Stadium.

Repeated weather interruptions robbed India of rhythm, but it was the relentless Australian pace attack that truly dictated terms. Only KL Rahul (38 off 30) offered resistance, showcasing composure and class amid the collapse. Rohit, making his 500th appearance for India, opened alongside new skipper Shubman Gill to loud cheers, but lasted just 14 balls.

After a vintage straight drive off Mitchell Starc, he fell to Josh Hazlewood, who exploited the bounce perfectly, the ball brushing Rohit's bat sticker before debutant Matthew Renshaw took a sharp catch at second slip.

Kohli's return was even shorter. His struggle against Starc's left-arm angle resurfaced, as a loose drive on the up resulted in an edge, brilliantly caught by Cooper Connolly at backward point. It was Kohli's first ODI duck in Australia.

Gill looked more assured but perished while trying to flick Nathan Ellis down the leg side, offering a simple catch to keeper Josh Philippe. Vice-captain Shreyas Iyer followed suit, gloving a steep Hazlewood bouncer to the same man as India faltered to 45 for 4 by the 14th over.

Rahul and Axar Patel (31) then stitched a 39-run fifth-wicket stand, briefly reviving the innings. Axar fell to spinner Matthew Kuhnemann, but Rahul kept pushing, displaying elegance with a straight drive and pull off Ellis, and back-to-back sixes off Matthew Short. His 30-run partnership with Washington Sundar kept India afloat, but the curtailed 26-over format and a late cluster of wickets stifled any death-over flourish. India ended on a below-par 136 for 9.

Australia, chasing a revised DLS target of 131, won with 29 balls to spare, taking a 1–0 lead in the three-match series. With matches in Adelaide and Sydney to come, India's senior pros now face mounting pressure to justify their recall.

We played catch-up after losing three wickets in Powerplay: Gill

India skipper Shubman Gill acknowledged it wasn't easy for his side to come back from the three early setbacks in the first ODI against Australia, saying the team still put up a competitive show by taking the match "pretty deep" against the hosts, here on Sunday.

> The Australian set up, how they played their cricket and how they were in your face all the time, intimidating and taking the game on, that was something that really inspired me. am really grateful to all those times (the hostile environment) because that shaped me as a cricketer
>
> -Virat Kohli, top-order Batter and former captain

India lost openers Rohit Sharma and Gill, and batting stalwart Virat Kohli, in the powerplay overs from which the tourists could never recover as they lost the rain-shortened match by seven wickets.

Brief scores:

India: 136 for 9 in 26 overs (KL Rahul 38, Axar Patel 31; Matthew Kuhnemann 2/26, Josh Hazlewood 2/20, Mitchell Owen 2/20).

Australia: 131 for 3 in 21.1 overs (Mitchell Marsh 46 not out, Josh Philippe 37) —*PTI*

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Desperate SL in search of maiden win against B'desh

NAVI MUMBAI, 19 OCT

Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka Match starts at 3.00 pm IST

With their Women's World Cup campaign in disarray, Sri Lanka will hope for some respite as they seek their maiden win in the tournament when they take on another struggling outfit in Bangladesh, here on Monday.

Like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka has two points in their account, but both of those were earned in washed-out matches.

Three defeats in five matches have kept the World Cup co-hosts in the penultimate spot in the eight-team competition.

Bangladesh have fared a tad better, given their win against the bottom-placed Pakistan had helped them open their account in the points table, but despite running the other formidable teams such as South Africa and England close, they could not get over the line.

Both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are in a desperate situation of keeping their hopes alive of making the semifinals. It will also depend on other results to go their way if they win each of their remaining two matches.

None of the eight teams is out of the race for the semifinals yet, in which two spots have been booked by Australia and South Africa, and there are three teams placed above India, England, and New Zealand who have better chances of making the final four.

Sri Lanka would be particularly pleased moving out of the rain-hit Colombo, where two of their matches were washed out, with incessant rains taking away any possibility of Chamari Athapaththu's side using the home advantage, as six of their seven matches were scheduled at the R Premadasa Stadium.

While there is no imminent rain threat here, the weather will remain hot and humid for the day-night match, which will be DY Patil Stadium's first of the four fixtures confirmed for this tournament, including one semifinal. —*PTI*

WJ C'ship: Tanvi's run ends with a silver

GUWAHATI, 19 OCT

Tanvi Sharma PHOTO: PTI

Indian shuttler Tanvi Sharma's bid to script history by winning a gold medal at the BWF World Junior Championships ended in heartbreak as she lost in straight games to Thailand's Anyapat Phichitpreechasak in the women's singles final here on Sunday.

The 16-year-old, who followed in the footsteps of former world No.1 Saina Nehwal and Aparna Popat to become only the third Indian female shuttler to reach the final of the tournament, lost 7-15, 12-15 to the second-seeded Thai.

Tanvi thus signed off with a silver medal — India's first at the World Junior Championships in 17 years.

Saina (gold in 2008 and silver in 2006) and Aparna (silver in 1996) are the only other Indian women to have won medals at the event.

It was a tight affair right from the start as both players moved neck and neck from 2-2 to 4-4, riding on each other's unforced errors.

The Thai's deceptive returns caught Tanvi at the front court as Phichitpreechasak opened up a 10-5 lead, with the Indian finding the net twice. —*PTI*

SOLIDARITY WITH AFGHANISTAN

Pakistan lashes out at ICC for 'biased' statement

LAHORE, 19 OCT

Ata Tarar and Jay Shah

PHOTO: PCB /PTI

Pakistan's Federal Minister for Information, Ata Tarar, has dismissed the International Cricket Council (ICC)'s statement on the deaths of three cricketers in Afghanistan for its "selective", "biased" nature.

The ICC and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had on Saturday condoled the death of Afghanistan cricketers in an aerial attack at the Paktika Province without mentioning Pakistan in their respective statements.

The governing bodies reacted after the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) decided to withdraw its team from a tri-series in Pakistan next month.

Pakistan Cricket Board had later announced that it would replace Afghanistan with Zimbabwe for the tri-series that also involves Sri Lanka.

"We dismiss and condemn this statement by the ICC, which gives the impression and makes claims that three Afghan cricketers were killed in Pakistan strikes," Tarar said in a statement on Sunday.

"The ICC has not bothered to independently verify the claims by the Afghanistan board and issued a statement claiming a Pakistan attack," he said.

The minister said Pakistan itself had been a victim of terrorism for years and demanded the ICC correct its statement.

"It is strange that a few hours after the ICC statement, the Chairman of the ICC, Jay Shah, repeated the same words on his social media account, and the Afghanistan board followed with similar words.

"The Afghanistan board made statements without presenting any real evidence," he added. —*PTI*

Rybakina wins Ningbo title to close in on WTA Finals

NINGBO, 19 OCT

Elena Rybakina rallied from a set down to beat Russian fourth seed Ekaterina Alexandrova 3-6, 6-0, 6-2, and win the Ningbo Open title on Sunday, as her late surge to reach next month's WTA Finals gained momentum.

A 10th career title for Rybakina means the Kazakh only has to reach the semifinals of the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo this week to seal the last qualifying spot for the season finale at the expense of Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva.

Others who have qualified for the WTA Finals, to be held in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh from November 1-8, are Aryna Sabalenka, Iga Swiatek, Coco Gauff, Amanda Anisimova, Jessica Pegula, Madison Keys, and Jasmine Paolini."I'd like to congratulate Ekaterina for a great week and great season," said Rybakina."It hasn't been an easy year for all of us, a difficult schedule... thank you so much to my team for always pushing me to be better."The end of the season isn't easy, but without you, I wouldn't be here.

Hopefully, we can push a little more this week (in Tokyo)."Alexandrova made a flying start, racing 4-1 ahead as Rybakina struggled to rein in the errors and mix up her game, before the 30-year-old comfortably took the opening set with a powerful forehand winner.

Desperate to prevent a fourth straight defeat by Alexandrova on hardcourts, Russian-born Rybakina came out firing in the next set. —*PTI*

Juventus slumps to defeat at Como

DUBAI, 19 OCT

SERIE A

Juventus' Francisco Conceicao in action with Como's Alberto Moreno PHOTO: X/@ JUVENTUS

Juventus lost 2-0 at Como in Serie A on Sunday, another disappointing result after five successive draws in all competitions for Igor Tudor's side. Como took the lead in the fourth minute when defender Marc-Oliver Kempf volleyed in from close range at the far post following Nico Paz's curling cross.

Juventus thought it had equalised in the 36th minute when Jonathan David slotted home from close range, but the Canadian's effort was ruled out for offside in the build-up.

Early in the second half, Kempf required treatment for a cut to his forehead after an accidental clash with teammate Jacobo Ramon, but was able to continue with heavy strapping.Juventus continued to struggle, and Paz doubled Como's lead in the 79th minute with a brilliant solo effort, cutting inside from the right to glide past Andrea Cambiaso before curling a left-footed strike beyond Michele Di Gregorio.The 21-year-old Argentine has contributed to eight of Como's nine league goals this season with four goals and four assists in seven matches, the most in Serie A.

Como moved up to fifth in the standings, level on 12 points with Juventus in sixth. —*PTI*

DP World India C'ship: Tommy wins title

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

England's Tommy Fleetwood was the epitome of calm and composure as he fired a brilliant seven-under 65 to clinch the inaugural DP World India Championship title with a two-stroke win over Japan's Keita Nakajima here on Sunday.

In a gripping final round, Fleetwood, who started the final day two shots behind, displayed his trademark poise under pressure, fending off a spirited charge from New Zealander Daniel Hiller (69) to finish with a total of 266 to lift the title.

It was Fleetwood's eighth DP World Tour victory and his first in India.

The Englishman had earlier featured at the 2016 Hero Indian Open and the 2012 Avantha Masters.Nakajima carded a three-under 69 to finish second at 20-under 268, while Shane Lowry (68), Alex Fitzpatrick (67), and Thriston Lawrence (65) shared the next spots on the leaderboard. Among Indians, Shiv Kapur turned in the best performance, firing five birdies and a bogey on the front nine before parring out to return a four-under 68 and finish tied 32nd at nine-under. —*PTI*

PREMIER LEAGUE

Rogers and Buendia seal win for spirited Villa

LONDON, 19 OCT

Morgan Rogers scored Villa's first before Emiliano Buendia completed Aston Villa's comeback PHOTO: X/@ASTONVILLA

Aston Villa dented the top-four ambition of Spurs, coming back from a goal down to secure a 2-1 win. Rodrigo Bentancur gave Spurs an early lead in the fifth minute with a terrific finish. Morgan Rogers equalised for the hosts, out of nowhere, in the 37th minute. Spurs continued to dominate the match in the second half, but substitute Emiliano Buendia scored a wonderful goal in the 77th minute to give Aston Villa an unlikely win at North London.

Morgan Rogers had leveled for Villa with a superb, dipping effort from distance shortly before the break, canceling out Rodrigo Bentancur's early opener for Spurs. Fit-again Amadou Onana and Evann Guessand returned to Villa's starting line-up as Emery made two changes from our 2-1 triumph over Burnley before the break.

Both sides went into the clash unbeaten in their last seven in all competitions, although recent history was on Villa's side, having won five of the previous seven meetings between the two teams.

But they were behind after just five minutes in the capital as the hosts recycled a corner, Mohammed Kudus crossed for Joao Palhinha, and he headed back across goal for Bentancur to slam into the net from 10 yards.

Matty Cash drilled a low strike wide in response to Spurs' fast start, as Villa found their way back into the encounter at a rain-sodden Spurs. —*PTI*

Day 2 protests by La Liga players in Miami censored

BARCELONA, 19 OCT

For a second straight day, protests by La Liga players against staging a regular-season game in Miami in December were censored or not fully broadcast for television audiences.

The television feed of Barcelona's home game against Girona switched right before kickoff to an exterior view of the stadium, which only showed part of the field from a distance. That impeded home audiences from seeing the teams' players standing still for the first 15 seconds in opposition to La Liga's plan to hold the Barcelona-Villarreal game across the Atlantic on 20 Dec. .

The broadcasts of the initial moments after kickoff of the day's other three games, Sevilla-Mallorca, Villarreal-Real Betis, and Atletico Madrid-Osasuna, focused closely from directly above on the center circle, instead of taking a wide-angle view of the field. —*PTI*